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THE CUP OF FURY

Books by
RUPERT HUGHES

THE CUP OF FURY
THE UNPARDONABLE SIN
WE CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING
IN A LITTLE TOWN
THE THIRTEENTH COMMANDMENT
CLIPPED WINGS
WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?
THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER
EMPTY POCKETS
LONG EVER AGO

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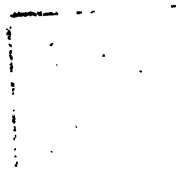

"It would be nice to be married," Marie Louise reflected, "if one could stay single at the same time."

The
CUP OF FURY

A Novel of Cities and Shipyards

BY

RUPERT HUGHES

Author of

"WE CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING"

"THE UNPARDONABLE SIN" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

HENRY RALEIGH

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"It would be nice to be married," Marie Louise reflected, "if one could stay single at the same time." . . . . . Frontispiece

He tried to swing her to the pommel, but she fought herself free and came to the ground and was almost trampled. . . Facing p. 3

"This is the life for me. I've been a heroine and a war-worker about as long as I can." . . . . . " 77

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BOOK I

IN LONDON

He tried to swing her to the pommel, but she fought herself free and came to the ground and was almost trampled.

THE CUP OF FURY

CHAPTER I

THEN the big door swung back as if of itself. Marie Louise had felt that she would scream if she were kept a moment outside. The luxury of simply wishing the gate ajar gave her a fairy-book delight enhanced by the pleasant deference of the footman, whose face seemed to be hung on the door like a Japanese mask.

Marie Louise rejoiced in the dull splendor of the hall. The obsolete gorgeousness of the London home had never been in good taste, but had grown as lovable with years as do the gaudy frumperies of a rich old relative. All the good, comfortable shelter of wealth won her blessing now as never before. The stairway had something of the grand manner, too, but it condescended graciously to escort her up to her own room; and there, she knew, was a solitude where she could cry as hard as she wanted to, and therefore usually did not want to. Besides, her mood now was past crying for.

She was afraid of the world, afraid of the light. She felt the cave-impulse to steal into a deep nook and cower there till her heart should be replenished with courage automatically, as ponds are fed from above.

Marie Louise wanted walls about her, and stillness, and people shut out. She was in one of the moods when the soul longs to gather its faculties together in a family, making one self of all its selves. Marie Louise had known privation and homelessness and the perils they bring a young woman, and now she had riches and a father and mother who were great people in a great land, and who had adopted her into their own hearts, their lives, their name. But to-day she asked nothing more than a deep cranny in a dark cave.

She would have said that no human voice or presence could be anything but a torture to her. And yet, when she hurried up the steps, she was suddenly miraculously restored to cheerfulness by the tiny explosion of a child's laughter instantly quenched. She knew that she was about to be ambushed as usual. She must pretend to be completely surprised once more, and altogether terrified with her perfect regularity.

Her soul had been so utterly surprised and terrified in the outer world that this infantile parody was curiously welcome, since nothing keeps the mind in balance on the tight-rope of sanity like the counterweight that comedy furnishes to tragedy, farce to frenzy, and puerility to solemnity.

The children called her "Auntie," but they were not hers except through the adoption of a love that had to claim some kinship. They looked like her children, though—so much so, indeed, that strangers thought that she was their young mother. But it was because she looked like their mother, who had died, that the American girl was a member of this British household, inheriting some of its wealth and much of its perilous destiny.

She had been ambuscaded in the street to-day by demons not of faery, but of fact, that had leaped out at her from nowhere. It solaced her somehow to burlesque the terror that had whelmed her, and, now that she was assailed by ruthless thugs of five and seven years, the shrieks she had not dared to release in the street she gave forth with vigor, as two nightgowned tots flung themselves at her with milk-curdling cries of:

"Boo-ooh!"

Holding up pink fat hands for pistols, they snapped their thumbs at her and said:

"Bang! Bang!"

And she emitted most amusing squeals of anguish and staggered back, stammering:

"Oh, p-p-please, Mr. Robbobber and Miss Burgurgular, take my l-l-life but spare my m-m-money."

She had been so genuinely scared before that she marred the sacred text now, and the First Murderer, who had all the conservative instincts of childhood, had to correct her misquotation of the sacred formula:

"No, no, Auntie. Say, 'Take my money but spare my life!' Now we dot to do it all over."

"I beg your pardon humbly," she said, and went back to be ambushed again. This time the boy had an inspiration. To murder and robbery he would add scalping.

But Marie Louise was tired. She had had enough of fright, real or feigned, and refused to be scalped. Besides, she had been to the hairdresser's, and she explained that she really could not afford to be scalped. The boy was bitterly disappointed, and he grew furious when the untimely maid came for him and for his ruthless sister and demanded that they come to bed at once or be reported.

As the warriors were dragged off to shameful captivity, Marie Louise, watching them, was suddenly shocked by the thought of how early in life humanity begins to revel in slaughter. The most innocent babes must be taught not to torture animals. Cruelty comes with them like a caul, or a habit brought in from a previous existence. They always almost murder their mothers and sometimes quite slay them when they are born. Their first pastimes are killing games, playing dead, stories of witches, cannibalistic ogres. The American Indian is the international nursery pet because of his traditional fiendishness.

It seemed inconsistent, but it was historically natural that the boy interrupted in his massacre of his beloved aunt should hang back to squall that he would say his prayers only to her. Marie Louise glanced at her watch. She had barely time to dress for dinner, but the children had to be obeyed. She made one weak protest.

"Fräulein hears your prayers."

"But she's wented out."

"Well, I'll hear them, then."

"Dot to tell us fairy-'tory, too," said the girl.

"All right, one fairy-'tory—"

She went to the nursery, and the cherubs swarmed up to her lap demanding "somefin bluggy."

Invention failed her completely. She hunted through her memory among the Grimms' fairy-tales. She could recall nothing that seemed sweet and guileless enough for these two lambs.

All that she could think of seemed to be made up of ghoulish

plots; of children being mistreated by harsh stepmothers; of their being turned over to peasants to slay; of their being changed into animals or birds; of their being seized by wolves, or by giants that drank blood and crunched children's bones as if they were reed birds; of hags that cut them up into bits or thrust them into ovens and cooked them for gingerbread. It occurred to her that all the German fairy-stories were murderously cruel. She felt a revulsion against each of the legends. But her mind could not find substitutes.

After a period of that fearful ordeal when children tyrannize for romances that will not come, her mind grew mutinous and balked. She confessed her poverty of ideas.

The girl, Bettina, sulked; the boy screamed:

"Aw, botheration! We might as well say our prayers and go to bed."

In the least pious of moods they dropped from her knees to their own and put their clasped hands across her lap. They became in a way hallowed by their attitude, and the world seemed good to her again as she looked down at the two children, beautiful as only children can be, innocent of wile, of hardship and of crime, safe at home and praying to their heavenly Father from whose presence they had so recently come.

But as she brooded over them motherly and took strength from them as mothers do, she thought of other children in other countries orphaned in swarms, starving in multitudes, waiting for food like flocks of lambs in the blizzard of the war. She thought still more vividly of children flung into the ocean. She had seen these children at her knees fighting against bitter medicines, choking on them and blurting them out at mouth and nose and almost, it seemed, at eyes. So it was very vivid to her how children thrown into the sea must have gagged with terror at the bitter medicine of death, strangled and smothered as they drowned.

She heard the prayers mumbled through, but at the hasty "Amen" she protested.

"You didn't thank God for anything. Haven't you anything to thank God for?"

If they had expressed any doubt, she would have told them of dozens of special mercies, but almost instantly they answered, "Oh yes!" They looked at each other, understood,

nodded, clapped their hands, and chuckled with pride. Then they bent their heads, gabled their finger-tips, and the boy said: "We t'ank Dee, O Dod, for making sink dat old *Lusitania.*" And the girl said, "A-men!"

Marie Louise gave a start as if she had been stabbed. It was the loss of the *Lusitania* that had first terrified her. She had just seen it announced on the placards of newsboys in London streets, and had fled home to escape from the vision, only to hear the children thank Heaven for it! She rose so suddenly that she flung the children back from their knees to their haunches. They stared up at her in wondering fear. She stepped outside the baleful circle and went striding up and down the room, fighting herself back to self-control, telling herself that the children were not to blame, yet finding them the more repulsive for their very innocence. The purer the lips, the viler the blasphemy.

She was not able to restrain herself from denouncing them with all her ferocity. She towered over them and cried out upon them: "You wicked, wicked little beasts, how dare you put such loathsome words into a prayer! God must have gasped with horror in heaven at the shame of it. Wherever did you get so hateful an idea?"

"Wicked your own self!" the boy snapped back. "Fräulein read it in the paper about the old boat, and she walked up and down the room like what you do, and she said, "*Ach, unser* Dott—how dood you are to us, to make sink dat *Lusitania!*"

He was going on to describe her ecstasy, but Marie Louise broke in: "It's Fräulein's work, is it? I might have known that! Oh, the fiend, the harpy!"

The boy did not know what a harpy was, but he knew that his beloved Fräulein was being called something, and he struck at Marie Louise fiercely, kicked at her shins and tried to bite her hands, screaming: "You shall not call our own precious Fräulein names. Harpy, your own self!"

And the little girl struck and scratched and made a curdled face and echoed, "Harpy, your own self!"

It hurt Marie Louise so extravagantly to be hated by these irascible cherubs that her anger vanished in regret. She pleaded: "But, my darlings, you don't know what you are saying. The *Lusitania* was a beautiful ship—"

The boy, Victor, was loyal always to his own: "She wasn't as beautiful as my yacht what I sail in the Round Pond."

Marie Louise condescended to argue: "Oh yes, she was! She was a great ship, noble like Saint Paul's Cathedral, and she was loaded with passengers, men and women and children: and then suddenly she was ripped open and sunk, and little children like you were thrown into the water, into the deep, deep, deep ocean. And the big waves tore them from their mothers' arms and ran off with them, choking and strangling them and dragging them down and down—forever down."

She was dizzied by the horde of visions mobbing her brain. Then the onrush of horror was checked abruptly as she saw the supercilious lad regarding her frenzy calmly. His comment was:

"It served 'em jolly well right for bein' on 'at old boat."

Marie Louise almost swooned with dread of such a soul. She shrank from the boy and groaned, "Oh, you toad, you little toad!"

He was frightened a little by her disgust, and he took refuge in a higher authority. "Fräulein told us. And she knows."

The bit lassiky stormed to his support: "She does so!" and drove it home with the last nail of feminine argument: "So there now!"

Marie Louise retorted, weakly: "We'll see! We'll soon see!" And she rushed out of the room, like another little girl, straight to the door of Sir Joseph, where she knocked impatiently. His man appeared and murmured through a crevice: "Sorry, miss, but Seh Joseph is dressing."

Marie Louise went to Lady Webling's door, and a maid came to whisper: "She is in her teb. We're having dinner at tome to-night, miss."

Marie Louise nodded. Dinner must be served, and on time. It was the one remaining solemnity that must not be forgotten or delayed.

She went to her own room. Her maid was in a stew about the hour, and the gown that was to be put on. Marie Louise felt that black was the only wear on such a Bartholomew's night. But Sir Joseph hated black so well that he had put a clause in his will against its appearance even at his own funeral. Marie Louise loved him dearly, but she

feared his prejudices. She had an abject terror of offending him, because she felt that she owed everything she had, and was, to the whim of his good grace. Gratitude was a passion with her, and it doomed her, as all passions do, good or bad, to the penalties human beings pay for every excess of virtue or vice—if, indeed, vice is anything but an immoderate, untimely virtue.

CHAPTER II

MARIE LOUISE let her maid select the gown. She was an exquisite picture as she stood before the long mirror and watched the buckling on of her armor, her armor of taffeta and velvet with the colors of sunlit leaves and noon-warmed flowers in carefully elected wrinkles assured with many a hook and eye. Her image was radiant and pliant and altogether love-worthy, but her thoughts were sad and stern.

She was resolved that Fräulein should not remain in the house another night. She wondered that Sir Joseph had not ousted her from the family at the first crash of war. The old crone! She could have posed for one of the Grimms' most vulturine witches. But she had kept a civil tongue in her head till now; the children adored her, and Sir Joseph had influence enough to save her from being interned or deported.

Hitherto, Marie Louise had felt sorry for her in her dilemma of being forced to live at peace in the country her own country was locked in war with. Now she saw that the woman's oily diplomacy was only for public use, and that all the while she was imbruing the minds of the little children with the dye of her own thoughts. The innocents naturally accepted everything she told them as the essence of truth.

Marie Louise hoped to settle the affair before dinner, but by the time she was gowned and primped, the first premature guest had arrived like the rathest primrose, shy, surprised, and surprising. Sir Joseph had gone below already. Lady Webling was hull down on the stairway.

Marie Louise saw that her protest must wait till after the dinner, and she followed to do her duty to the laws of hospitality.

Sir Joseph liked to give these great affairs. He loved to eat and to see others eat. "The more the merrier," was his

motto—one of the most truthless of the old saws. Little dinners at Sir Joseph's—what he called "on fameals"—would have been big dinners elsewhere. A big dinner was like a Lord Mayor's banquet. He needed only a crier at his back and a Petronius to immortalize his *gourmandise*.

To-night he had great folk and small fry. Nobody pretended to know the names of everybody. Sir Joseph himself leaned heavily on the man who sang out the labels of the guests, and even then his wife whispered them to him as they came forward, and for a precaution, kept slipping them into the conversation as reminders.

There were several Americans present: a Doctor and Mrs. Clinton Worthing who had come over with a special shipload of nurses. The ship had been fitted out by Mrs. Worthing, who had been Muriel Schuyler, daughter of the giant plutocrat, Jacob Schuyler, who was lending England millions of money weekly. A little American millionaire, Willie Enslee, living in England now on account of some scandal in his past, was there. He did not look romantic.

Marie Louise had no genius for names, or faces, either. To-night she was frightened, and she made some horrible blunders, greeting the grisly Mr. Verrinder by the name of Mr. Hilary. The association was clear, for Mr. Hilary had called Mr. Verrinder atrocious names in Parliament; but it was like calling "Mr. Capulet" "Mr. Montague." Marie Louise tried to redeem her blunder by putting on an extra effusiveness for the sake of Mr. and Mrs. Norcross. Mrs. Norcross had only recently shaken off the name of Mrs. Patchett after a resounding divorce. So Marie Louise called her new husband by the name of her old, which made it very pleasant.

Her wits were so badly dispersed that she gave up the attempt to take in the name of an American whom Lady Webling passed along to her as "Mr. Davidge, of the States." And he must have been somebody of importance, for even Sir Joseph got his name right. Marie Louise, however, disliked him cordially at once—for two reasons: first, she hated herself so much that she could not like anybody just then; next, this American was entirely too American. He was awkward and indifferent, but not at all with the easy amble and patrician unconcern of an English aristocrat.

Davidge had thought her marvelous and had asked the manager of the theater to introduce him. The manager thought him a young fool, and Davidge had felt himself one when he went back to the dingy stage, where he found Mamise among a troupe of trained animals waiting to go on. She was teasing a chittering, cigar-smoking trained ape on a bicycle, and she proved to be an extraordinarily ordinary, painfully plebeian girl, common in voice and diction, awkward and rather contemptuous of the stage-door Johnnie. Davidge had never ceased to blush, and blushed again now, when he recalled his labored compliment, "I expect to see your name in the electric lights some of these days—or nights, Miss Mamise."

She had grumbled, "Much ubbliged!" and returned to the ape, while Davidge slunk away, ashamed.

He had not forgotten that name, though the public had. He had never seen "Mamise" in the electric lights. He had never found the name in any dictionary. He had supposed her to be a foreigner—Spanish, Polish, Czech, French, or something. He had not been able to judge her nationality from the two gruff words, but he had often wondered what had happened to her. She might have been killed in a train wreck or been married to the ape-trainer or gone to some other horrible conclusion. He had pretty well buried her among his forgotten admirations and torments, when lo and behold! she emerged from a crowd of peeresses and plutocrats in London.

He had sprung toward her with a wild look of recognition before he had had time to think it over. He had been rebuffed by a cold glance and then by an English intonation and a fashionable phrase. He decided that his memory had made a fool of him, and he stood off, humble and confused.

But his eyes quarreled with his ears, and kept telling him that this tall beauty who ignored him so perfectly, so haughtily, was really his lost Mamise.

If men would trust their intuitions oftener they would not go wrong so often, perhaps, since their best reasoning is only guesswork, after all. It was not going to be destiny that brought Davidge and Marie Louise together again so much as the man's hatred of leaving anything unfinished—

even a dream or a vague desire. There was no shaking Davidge off a thing he determined on except as you shake off a snapping-turtle, by severing its body from its head.

A little later Sir Joseph sought the man out and treated him respectfully, and Marie Louise knew he must be somebody. She found him staring at her over Sir Joseph's shoulder and puzzling about her. And this made her wretchedly uncomfortable, for perhaps, after all, she fretted, he had indeed met her somewhere before, somewhere in one of those odious strata she had passed through on her way up to the estate of being called daughter by Lady Webling.

She forgot her misgivings and was restored to equanimity by the incursion of Polly Widdicombe and her husband. Polly was one of the best-dressed women in the world. Her husband had the look of the husband of the best-dressed woman in the world. Polly had a wiry voice, and made no effort to soften it, but she was tremendously smart. She giggled all the time and set people off in her vicinity, though her talk was rarely witty on its own account.

Laughter rippled all through her life. She talked of her griefs in a plucky, riant way, making eternal fun of herself as a giddy fool. She carried a delightful jocundity wherever she went. She was aristocratic, too, in the postgraduate degree of being careless, reckless, superior even to good manners. She had a good heart and amiable feelings; these made manners enough.

She had lineage as well, for her all-American family ran straight back into the sixteen hundreds, which was farther than many a duke dared trace his line. She had traveled the world; she had danced with kings, and had made two popes laugh and tweak her pointed chin. She wasn't afraid of anybody, not even of peasants and servants, or of being friendly with them, or angry with them.

Marie Louise adored her. She felt that it would make no difference to Polly's affection if she found out all there was to find out about Marie Louise. And yet Polly's friendship did not have the dull certainty of indestructibility. Marie Louise knew that one word wrong or one act out of key might end it forever, and then Polly would be her loud and ardent enemy, and laugh at her instead of for her. Polly could hate as briskly as she could love.

She was in one of her vitriolic moods now because of the *Lusitania*.

"I shouldn't have come to-night," she said, "except that I want to talk to a lot of people about Germany. I want to tell everybody I know how much I loathe 'em all. 'The Hymn of Hate' is a lullaby to what I feel."

Polly was also conducting a glorious war with Lady Clifton-Wyatt. Lady C.-W. had bullied everybody in London so successfully that she went straight up against Polly Widdicombe without a tremor. She got what-for, and everybody was delighted. The two were devoted enemies from then on, and it was beautiful to see them come together.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt followed Polly up the receiving line to-night and invited a duel, but Polly was in no humor for a fight with anybody but Germans. She turned her full-orbed back on Lady C.-W. and, so to speak, gnashed her shoulder-blades at her. Lady C.-W. passed by without a word, and Marie Louise was glad to hide behind Polly, for Marie Louise was mortally afraid of Lady C.-W.

She saw the American greet her as if he had met her before. Lady Clifton-Wyatt was positively polite to him. He must be a very great man.

She heard Lady Clifton-Wyatt say something about, "How is the new ship coming on?" and the American said, "She's doing as well as could be expected."

So he was a ship-builder. Marie Louise thought that his must be a heartbreaking business in these days when ships were being slaughtered in such numbers. She asked Polly and her husband if they knew him or his name.

Widdicombe shook his head. Polly laughed at her husband. "How do you know? He might be your own mother, for all you can tell. Put on your distance-glasses, you poor fish." She turned to Marie Louise. "You know how near-sighted Tom is."

"An excellent fault in a man," said Marie Louise.

"Oh, I don't know," said Polly. "You can't trust even the blind ones. And you'll notice that when Tom comes to one of these décolleté dinners, he wears his reading-glasses."

All this time Widdicombe was taking out his distance-glasses, taking off his reading-glasses and pouching them and putting them away, and putting on his distance-glasses, and

from force of habit putting their pouch away. Then he stared at Davidge, took off his distance-glasses, found the case with difficulty, put them up, pocketed them, and stood blearing into space while he searched for his reading-glasses, found them, put the case back in his pocket and saddled his nose with the lenses.

Polly waited in a mockery of patience and said:

"Well, after all that, what?"

"I don't know him," said Widdicombe.

It was a good deal of an anticlimax to so much work.

Polly said: "That proves nothing. Tom's got a near-memory, too. The man's a pest. If he didn't make so much money, I'd abandon him on a door-step."

That was Polly's form of baby-talk. Everybody knew how she doted on Tom: she called him names as one scolds a pet dog. Widdicombe had the helpless manner of one, and was always at heel with Polly. But he was a Titan financially, and he was signing his name now to munitions-contracts as big as national debts.

Marie Louise was summoned from the presence of the Widdicombes by one of Lady Webling's most mysterious glances, to meet a new-comer whom Lady Webling evidently regarded as a special treasure. Lady Webling was as wide as a screen, and she could always form a sort of alcove in front of her by turning her back on the company. She made such a nook now and, taking Marie Louise's hand in hers, put it in the hand of the tall and staring man whose very look Marie Louise found invasive. His handclasp was somehow like an illicit caress.

How strange it is that with so much modesty going about, people should be allowed to wear their hands naked! The fashion of the last few years compelling the leaving off of gloves was not really very nice. Marie Louise realized it for the first time. Her fastidious right hand tried to escape from the embrace of the stranger's fingers, but they clung devil-fishily, and Lady Webling's soft cushion palm was there conniving in the abduction. And her voice had a wheedling tone:

"This is my dear Nicky I have spoken of so much—Mr. Easton, you know."

"Oh yes," said Marie Louise.

"Be very nice to him," said Lady Webling. "He is taking you out to dinner."

At that moment the butler appeared, solemn as a long-awaited priest, and there was such a slow crystallization as follows a cry of "Fall in!" to weary soldiers. The guests were soon in double file and on the march to the battle-field with the cooks.

Nicky Easton still had Marie Louise's hand; he had carried it up into the crook of his right arm and kept his left hand over it for guard. A lady can hardly wrench loose from such an attention, but Marie Louise abhorred it.

Nicky treated her as a sort of possession, and she resented his courtesies. He began too soon with compliments. One hates to have even a bunch of violets jabbed into one's nose with the command, "Smell!"

She disliked his accent, too. There was a Germanic something in it as faint as the odor of high game. It was a time when the least hint of Teutonism carried the stench of death to British nostrils.

Lady Webling and Sir Joseph were known to be of German birth, and their phrases carried the tang, but Sir Joseph had become a naturalized citizen ages ago and had won respect and affection a decade back. His lavish use of his money for charities and for great industries had won him his knighthood, and while there was a certain sniff of suspicion in certain fanatic quarters at the mention of his name, those who knew him well had so long ago forgotten his alien birth that they forgave it him now.

As for Marie Louise, she no longer heeded the Prussic acid of his speech. She was as used to it as to his other little mannerisms. She did not think of the old couple as fat and awkward. She did not analyze their attributes or think of their features in detail. She thought of them simply as them. But Easton was new; he brought in a subtle whiff of the hated Germany that had done the *Lusitania* to death.

The fate of the ship made the dinner resemble a solemn wake. The triumphs of the chef were but funeral baked meats. The feast was brilliant and large and long, and it seemed criminal to see such waste of provender when so much of the world was hungry. The talk was almost all of the *Lusitania* and the deep damnation of her taking off. Many of the

guests had crossed the sea in her graceful shell, and they felt a personal loss as well as a bitterness of rage at the worst of the German sea crimes.

Davidge was seated remotely from Marie Louise, far down the flowery lane of the table. She could not see him at all, for the candles and the roses. Just once she heard his voice in a lull. Its twang carried it all the way up the alley:

"A man that would kill a passenger-ship would shoot a baby in its cradle. When you think how long it takes to build a ship, how much work she represents, how sweet she is when she rides out and all that—by Gosh! there's no word mean enough for the sk-oundrels. There's nothing they won't do now—absolutely nothing."

She heard no more of him, and she did not see him again that night. She forgot him utterly. Even the little wince of distress he gave her by his provincialism was forgotten in the anguish her foster-parents caused her.

For Marie Louise had a strange, an odious sensation that Sir Joseph and Lady Webling were not quite sincere in their expressions of horror and grief over the finished epic, the *Lusitania*. It was not for lack of language; they used the strongest words they could find. But there was missing the subtile somewhat of intonation and gesture that actors call sincerity. Marie Louise knew how hard it is even for a great actor to express his simplest thoughts with conviction. No, it was when he expressed them best that he was least convincing, since an emotion that can be adequately presented is not a very big emotion; at least it does not overwhelm the soul. Inadequacy, helplessness, gaucherie, prove that the feelings are bigger than the eloquence. They "get across the footlights" between each player on the human stage and his audience.

Yes, that was it: Sir Joseph and Lady Webling were protesting too well and too much. Marie Louise hated herself for even the disloyalty of such a criticism of them, but she was repelled somehow by such rhetoric, and she liked far better the dour silence of old Mr. Verrinder. He looked a bishop who had got into a layman's evening dress by mistake. He was something very impressive and influential in the government, nobody knew just what.

Marie Louise liked still better than Verrinder's silence

the distracted muttering and stammering of a young English aviator, the Marquess of Strathdene, who was recuperating from wounds and was going up in the air rapidly on the Webling champagne. He was maltreating his bread and throwing in champagne with an apparent eagerness for the inevitable result. Before he grew quite too thick to be understood, he groaned to himself, but loudly enough to be heard the whole length and breadth of the table: "I remember readin' about old Greek witch name Circe—changed human beings into shape of swine. I wonder who turned those German swine into the shape of human beings."

Marie Louise noted that Lady Webling was shocked—by the vulgarity, no doubt. "Swine" do not belong in dining-room language—only in the platters or the chairs. Marie Louise caught an angry look also in the eye of Nicholas Easton, though he, too, had been incisive in his comments on the theme of the dinner. His English had been uncannily correct, his phrases formal with the exactitude of a book on syntax or the dialogue of a gentleman in a novel. But he also was drinking too much, and as his lips fuddled he had trouble with a very formal "without which." It resulted first as "veetowit veech," then as "whidthout witch." He made it on the third trial.

Marie Louise, turning her eyes his way in wonder, encountered two other glances moving in the same direction. Lady Webling looked anxious, alarmed. Mr. Verrinder's gaze was merely studious. Marie Louise felt an odd impression that Lady Webling was sending a kind of heliographic warning, while the look of Mr. Verrinder was like a search-light that studies and registers, then moves away.

Marie Louise disliked Easton more and more, but Lady Webling kept recommending him with her solicitous manner toward him. She made several efforts, too, to shift the conversation from the *Lusitania;* but it swung always back. Much bewilderment was expressed because the ship was not protected by a convoy. Many wondered why she was where she was when she was struck, and how she came to take that course at all.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt, who had several friends on board and certain of their fate, was unusually fierce in blaming

the government. She always blamed it for everything, when it was Liberal. And now she said:

"It was nothing short of murder to have left the poor ship to steal in by herself without protection. Whatever was the Admiralty thinking of? If the Cabinet doesn't fall for this, we might as well give up."

The Liberals present acknowledged her notorious prejudices with a sigh of resignation. But the Marquess of Strathdene rolled a foggy eye and a foggy tongue in answer:

"Darlling llady, there must have been war-ships waitin' to convoy the *Lusitania;* but she didn't come to rendezvous because why? Because some filthy Zherman gave her a false wireless and led her into a trap."

This amazing theory with its drunken inspiration of plausibility startled the whole throng. It set eyeballs rolling in all directions like a break in a game of pool. Everybody stared at Strathdene, then at somebody else. Marie Louise's racing gaze noted that Mr. Verrinder's eyes went slowly about again, studying everybody except Strathdene.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt's eyes as they ran simply expressed a disgust that she put into words with her usual frankness:

"Don't be more idiotic than necess'ry, my dear boy; there are secret codes, you know."

"S-secret codes I know? Secret codes the Germans know—that's what you mean, sweetheart. I don't know one little secret, but Huns— Do you know how many thousand Germans there are loose in England—do you?"

Lady Clifton-Wyatt shook her head impatiently. "I haven't the faintest notion. Far more than I wish, I'm sure."

"I hope so, unless you wish fifty thousand. And God knows how many more. And I'm not alluthing to Germans in disguise, naturalized Germans—quinine pills with a little coating. I'm not referring to you, of course, Sir Joseph. Greates' respect for you. Ever'body has. You have done all you could to overcome the fatal error of your parents. You're a splen'id gen'l'man. Your 'xception proves rule. Even Germans can't all be perf'ly rotten."

"Thank you, Marquess, thank you," said Sir Joseph, with a natural embarrassment.

Marie Louise noted the slight difference between the English "Thank you" and Sir Joseph's "Thang gyou."

Then Lady Webling's eyes went around the table, catching up the women's eyes and forms, and she led them in a troop from the embarrassing scene. She brought the embarrassment with her to the drawing-room, where the women sat about smoking miserably and waiting for the men to come forth and take them home.

CHAPTER III

THERE must have been embarrassment enough left to go round the dining-table, too, for in an unusually brief while the men flocked into the drawing-room. And they began to plead engagements in offices or homes or Parliament.

It was not yet ten o'clock when the last of the guests had gone, except Nicholas Easton. And Sir Joseph took him into his own study. Easton walked a trifle too solemnly straight, as if he had set himself an imaginary chalk-line to follow. He jostled against the door, and as he closed it, swung with it uncertainly.

Lady Webling asked almost at once, with a nod of the head in the direction of the study door:

"Well, my dear child, what do you think of Nicky?"

"Oh, I don't know. He's nice, but—"

"We're very fond of him, Sir Joseph and I—and we do hope you will be."

Marie Louise wondered if they were going to select a husband for her. It was a dreadful situation, because there was no compulsion except the compulsion of obligation. They never gave her a chance to do anything for them; they were always doing things for her. What an ingrate she would be to rebuff their first real desire! And yet to marry a man she felt such antipathy for—surely there could be some less hateful way of obliging her benefactors. She felt like a castaway on a desert, and there was something of the wilderness in the immensity of the drawing-room with its crowds of untenanted divans and of empty chairs drawn into groups as the departed guests had left them.

Lady Webling stood close to Marie Louise and pressed for an answer.

"You don't really dislike Nicky, do you?"

"N-o-o. I've not known him long enough to dislike him very well."

She tried to soften the rebuff with a laugh, but Lady Webling sighed profoundly and smothered her disappointment in a fond "Good night." She smothered the great child, too, in a hugely buxom embrace. When Marie emerged she was suddenly reminded that she had not yet spoken to Lady Webling of Fräulein Ernst's attack on the children's souls. She spoke now.

"There's one thing, mamma, I've been wanting to tell you all evening. Please don't let it distress you, but really I'm afraid you'll have to get rid of Fräulein."

Lady Webling's voluminous yawn was stricken midway into a gasp. Marie Louise told her the story of the diabolical prayer. Lady Webling took the blow without reeling. She expressed shock, but again expressed it too perfectly.

She promised to "reprimand the foolish old soul."

"To reprimand her!" Marie Louise cried. "You won't send her away?"

"Send her away where, my child? Where should we send the poor thing? But I'll speak to her very sharply. It was outrageous of her. What if the children should say such things before other people? It would be frightful! Thank you for telling me, my dear. And now I'm for bed! And you should be. You look quite worn out. Coming up?"

Lady Webling laughed and glanced at the study door, implying and rejoicing in the implication that Marie Louise was lingering for a last word with Easton.

Really she was trying to avoid climbing the long stairs with Lady Webling's arm about her. For the first time in her life she distrusted the perfection of the old soul's motives. She felt like a Judas when Lady Webling offered her cheek for another good-night kiss. Then she pretended to read a book while she listened for Lady Webling's last puff as she made the top step.

At once she poised for flight. But the study door opened and Easton came out. He was bending down to murmur into Sir Joseph's downcast countenance. Easton was saying, with a tremulous emotion, "This is the beginning of the end of England's control of the sea."

Marie Louise almost felt that there was a quiver of eagerness rather than of dread in his tone, or that the dread was the awe of a horrible hope.

Sir Joseph was brooding and shaking his head. He seemed to start as he saw Marie Louise. But he smiled on her dotingly and said:

"You are not gone to bed yet?"

She shook her head and sorrowed over him with a sudden rush of gratitude to his defense. She did not reward Easton's smile with any favor, though he widened his eyes in admiration.

Sir Joseph said: "Good night, Nicky. It is long before I see you some more."

Nicholas nodded. "But I shall see Miss Marie Louise quite soon now."

This puzzled Marie Louise. She pondered it while Nicky bent and kissed her hand, heaved a guttural, gluttonous "Ah!" and went his way.

It was nearly a week later before she had a clue to the riddle. Then Sir Joseph came home to luncheon unexpectedly. He had an envelop with him, sealed with great red buttons of wax. He asked Marie Louise into his office and said, with an almost stealthy importance:

"My darling, I have a little favor to ask of you. Sometimes, you see, when I am having a big dealing on the Stock Exchange I do not like that everybody knows my business. Too many people wish to know all I do, so they can be doing the same. What everybody knows helps nobody. It is my wish to get this envelop to a man without somebody finding out something. Understand?"

"Yes, papa!" Marie Louise answered with the utmost confidence that what he did was good and wise and straight. She experienced a qualm when Sir Joseph explained that Nicky was the man. She wondered why he did not come to the house. Then she rebuked herself for presuming to question Sir Joseph's motives. He had never been anything but good to her, and he had been so whole-heartedly good that for her to give thought-room to a suspicion of him was heinous.

He had business secrets and stratagems of tremendous financial moment. She had known him to work up great drives on the market and to use all sorts of people to prepare his attacks. She did not understand big business methods. She regarded them all with childlike bewilderment. When, then, Sir Joseph asked her to meet Nicky, as if casually, in

Regent's Park, and convey the envelop from her hand to Nicky's without any one's witnessing the transfer, she felt the elation of a child intrusted with an important errand. So she walked all the way to Regent's Park with the long strides of a young woman out for a constitutional. She found a bench where she was told to, and sat down to bask in the spring air, and wait.

By and by Easton sauntered along, lifted his hat to Marie Louise, and made a great show of surprise. She rose and gave him her hand. She had taken the precaution to wear gloves —also she had the envelop in her hand. She left it in Nicky's. He smuggled it into his coat pocket, and murmuring, "So sorry I can't stop," lifted his hat and hurried off.

Marie Louise sat down again and after a time resumed her constitutional.

Sir Joseph was full of thanks when she saw him at night.

Some days later he asked Marie Louise to meet Nicky outside a Bond Street shop. She was to have a small parcel and drop it. Nicky would stoop and pick it up and hand her in its stead another of similar wrapper. She was to thank him and come home.

Another day Marie Louise received from Sir Joseph a letter and a request to take the children with her for a long walk, ending at the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens. The children carried their private navies with them and squatted at the brim of the huge basin, poking their reluctant yachts to sea. The boy Victor perfected a wonderful scheme for using a long stick as a submarine. He thrust his arm under water and from a distance knocked his sister's sailboat about till its canvas was afloat and it filled and sank. All the while he wore the most distant of expressions, but canny little Bettina soon realized who had caused this catastrophe and how, and she went for Victor of the U-stick with finger-nails and feet and nearly rounded him into the toy ocean. It evidently made a difference whose ship was gored.

Marie Louise darted forward to save Victor from a ducking as well as a trouncing, and nearly ran over a man who was passing.

It was Ross Davidge, whiling away an hour between appointments. He thought he recognized Marie Louise, but he was not sure. Women in the morning look so unlike their evening selves. He dared not speak.

Davidge lingered around trying to get up the courage to speak, but Marie Louise was too distraught with the feud even to see him when she looked at him. She would not have known him, anyway.

Davidge was confirmed in his guess at her identity by the appearance of the man he had seen at her side at the dinner. But the confirmation was Davidge's exile, for the fellow lifted his hat with a look of great surprise and said to Marie Louise, "Fancy finding you heah!"

"Blah!" said Davidge to himself, and went on about his business.

Marie Louise did not pretend surprise at seeing Easton, but went on scolding Victor and Bettina.

"If any of these other boys catch you playing submarine they'll submarine you!"

And she brought the proud Bettina to book with a, "You were so glad the *Lusitania* was sunk, you see now how it feels!"

She felt the puerile incongruity of the rebuke, but it sufficed to send Bettina into a cyclone of grief. She was already one of those who are infinitely indifferent to the sufferings of others and infinitesimally sensitive to their own.

When Nicky heard the story he gave Marie Louise a curious look of disapproval and took Bettina into his lap. She was also already one of those ladies who find a man's lap an excellent consolation. He got rid of her adroitly and when she and Victor were once more engaged in navigation Nicky took up the business he had come for.

"May I stop a moment?" he said, and sat down.

"I have a letter for you," said Marie Louise.

His roving eyes showed him that the coast was clear, and he slipped a letter into her hand-bag which she opened, and from it he took the letter she cautiously disclosed. He chatted awhile and moved away.

This sort of meeting took place several times in several places. When the crowds were too great or a bobby loitered about, Nicky would murmur to Marie Louise that she had better start home. He would take her arm familiarly and the transfer of the parcel would be deftly achieved.

This messenger service went on for several weeks. Sir Joseph apologized for the trouble he gave Marie Louise. He

seemed to be sincerely unhappy about it, and his little eyes in their fat, watery bags peered at her with a tender regret and an ulterior regret as well.

He explained a dozen times that he sent her because it was such an important business and he had no one else to trust. And Marie Louise, for all her anxiety, was sadly glad of his confidence, regarded it as sacred, and would not violate it so much as to make the least effort to learn what messages she was carrying. Nothing, of course, would have been easier than to pry open one of these envelops. Sometimes the lapel was hardly sealed. But she would as soon have peeked into a bathroom.

Late in June the Weblings left town and settled in the great country seat Sir Joseph had bought from a bankrupt American who had bought it from nobility gone back to humility. Here life was life. There were forests and surreptitious pheasants, deer that would almost but never quite come to call, unseen nightingales that sang from lofty nave and transept like cherubim all wings and voice.

The house was usually full of guests, but they were careful not to intrude upon their hosts nor their hosts upon them. The life was like life at a big hotel. There was always a little gambling to be had, tennis, golf, or music, or a quiet chat, gardens to stroll and sniff or grub in, horses to ride, motors at beck and call, solitude or company.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt came down for a week-end and struck up a great friendship with the majestic Mrs. Prothero from Washington, D. C., so grand a lady that even Lady C.-W. was a bit in awe of her, so gracious a personage that even Lady C.-W. could not pick a quarrel with her.

Mrs. Prothero gathered Marie Louise under her wing and urged her to visit her when she came to America. But Polly Widdicombe had already pledged Marie Louise to make her home her own on that side of the sea. Polly came down, too, and had "the time of her young life" in doing a bit of the women's war work that became the beautiful fashion of the time. The justification of it was that it released men for the trenches, but Polly insisted that it was shamefully good sport.

She and Marie Louise went about in breeches and shirts and worked like hostlers around the stables and in the pad-

docks, breaking colts and mucking out stalls. They donned the blouses and boots of peasants, and worked in the fields with rake and hoe and harrow. They even tried the plow, but they followed it too literally, and the scallopy furrows they drew across the fields made the yokels laugh or grieve, according to their natures.

The photographers were alive to the piquancy of these revelations, and portraits of Marie Louise in knickers and puttees, and armed with agricultural weapons, appeared in the pages of all the weeklies along with other aristocrats and commoners. Some of these even reached America.

There was just one flaw for Rosalind in this "As You Like It" life and that was the persistence of the secret association with Nicky. It was the strangest of clandestine affairs.

Marie Louise had always liked to get out alone in a saddle or behind the wheel of a runabout, and Sir Joseph, when he came up from town, fell into the habit of asking her once in a while to take another little note to Nicky.

She found him in out-of-the-way places. He would step from a clump of bushes by the road and hail her car, or she would overtake him and offer him a lift to his inn, or she would take horse and gallop across country and find him awaiting her in some lonely avenue or in the twist of a ravine.

He was usually so preoccupied and furtive that he made no proffer of courtship; but once when he seemed peculiarly triumphant he rode so close to her that their knees grided and their spurs clashed, and he tried to clip her in his arms. She gathered her horse and let him go, and he plunged ahead so abruptly that the clinging Nicky dragged Marie Louise from her saddle backward. He tried to swing her to the pommel of his own, but she fought herself free and came to the ground and was almost trampled. She was so rumpled and so furious, and he so frightened, that he left her and spurred after her horse, brought him back, and bothered her no more that day.

"If you ever annoy me again," she said, "it 'll be the last you'll see of me."

She was too useful to be treated as a mere beauty, and she had him cowed.

It was inevitable that Marie Louise, being silently urged

to love Nicky, should helplessly resist the various appeals in his behalf.

There is no worse enemy to love than recommendation. There is something froward about the passion. It hangs back like a fretful child, loathing what is held out for its temptation, longing for the forbidden, the sharp, the perilous.

Next to being asked to love, trying to love is the gravest impediment. Marie Louise kept telling herself that she ought to marry Nicky, and herself kept refusing to obey.

From very perversity her heart turned to other interests. She was desperately in love with soldiers *en masse* and individually. There was safety in numbers and a canceling rivalry between those who were going out perhaps to death and those who had come back from the jaws of death variously the worse for the experience.

The blind would have been irresistible in their groping need of comfort, if there had not been the maimed of body or mind putting out their incessant pleas for a gramercy of love. Those whose wounds were hideous took on an uncanny beauty from their sacrifice.

She busied herself about them and suffered ecstasies of pity.

She wanted to go to France and get near to danger, to help the freshly wounded, to stanch the spouting arteries, to lend courage to the souls dismayed by the first horror of the understanding that thenceforth they must go through life piecemeal.

But whenever she made application she met some vague rebuff. Her appeals were passed on and on and the blame for their failure was referred always to some remote personage impossible to reach.

Eventually it dawned on her that there was actually an official intention to keep her out of France. This stupefied her for a time. One day it came over her that she was herself suspect. This seemed ridiculous beyond words in in view of her abhorrence of the German cause in large and in detail. Ransacking her soul for an explanation, she ran upon the idea that it was because of her association with the Weblings.

She was ashamed to have given such a thought passage through her mind. But it came back as often as she drove

it out and then the thought began to hover about her that perhaps the suspicion was not so insane as she believed. The public is generally unreasonable, but its intuitions, like a woman's, are the resultants of such complex instincts that they are above analysis.

But the note-carrying went on, and she could not escape from the suspicion or its shadow of disgrace. Like a hateful buzzard it was always somewhere in her sky.

Once the suspicion had domiciled itself in her world, it was incessantly confirmed by the minutiæ of every-day existence. The interchange of messages with Nicky Easton grew unexplainable on any other ground. The theory of secret financial dealings looked ludicrous; or if the dealings were financial, they must be some of the trading with the enemy that was so much discussed in the papers.

She felt that she had been conniving in one of the spy-plots that all the Empire was talking about. She grew afraid to the last degree of fear. She saw herself on the scaffold. She resolved to carry no more messages.

But the next request of Sir Joseph's found her complying automatically. It had come to be her habit to do what he asked her to do, and to take pride in the service as a small instalment on her infinite debt. And every time her resentment rose to an overboiling point, Sir Joseph or Lady Webling would show her some exquisite kindness or do some great public service that won commendation from on high.

One day when she was keyed up to protest Lady Webling discharged Fräulein Ernst for her pro-Germanism and engaged an English nurse. Another day Lady Webling asked her to go on a visit to a hospital. There she lavished tenderness on the British wounded and ignored the German. How could Marie Louise suspect her of being anti-British? Another time when Marie Louise was almost ready to rebel she saw Sir Joseph's name heading a war subscription, and that night he made, at a public meeting, a speech denouncing Germany in terms of vitriol.

After all, Marie Louise was not English. And America was still neutral. The President had wrung from Germany a promise of better behavior, and in a sneaking way the promise was kept, with many a violation quickly apologized for.

Still, England wrestled for her life. There seemed to be hardly room in the papers for the mere names of the dead and the wounded, and those still more pitiable ones, the missing.

Marie Louise lost many a friend, and all of her friends lost and lost. She wore herself out in suffering for others, in visiting the sick, the forlorn, the anxious, the newly bereaved.

The strain on Marie Louise's heart was the more exhausting because she had a craven feeling all the while that perhaps she was being used somehow as a tool for the destruction of English plans and men. She tried to get the courage to open one of those messages, but she was afraid that she might find confirmation. She made up her mind again and again to put the question point-blank to Sir Joseph, but her tongue faltered. If he were guilty, he would deny it; if he were innocent, the accusation would break his heart. She hated Nicky too much to ask him. He would lie in any case.

She was nagged incessantly by a gadfly of conscience that buzzed in her ears the counsel to tell the police. Sometimes on her way to a tryst with Easton a spirit in her feet led her toward a police station, but another spirit carried her past, for she would visualize the sure consequences of such an exposure. If her suspicions were false, she would be exposed as a combination of dastard and dolt. If they were true, she would be sending Sir Joseph and Lady Webling perhaps to the gallows.

To betray those who had been so angelic to her was simply unthinkable.

Irresolution and meditation made her a very Hamlet of postponement and inaction. Hamlet had only a ghost for counselor, and a mother to be the first victim of his rashness. No wonder he hesitated. And Marie Louise had only hysterical suspicion to account for her thoughts; and the victims of her first step would be the only father and mother she had ever really known. America itself was another Hamlet of debate and indecision, weighing evidences, pondering theories, deferring the sword, hoping that Germany would throw away the baser half. And all the while time slid away, lives slid away, nations fell.

In the autumn the town house was opened again. There was much thinly veiled indignation in the papers and in the

circulation of gossip because of Sir Joseph's prominence in English life. The Germans were so relentless and so various in their outrages upon even the cruel usages of combat that the sound of a German name grew almost unbearable. People were calling for Sir Joseph's arrest. Others scoffed at the cruelty and cowardice of such hysteria.

A once-loved prince of German blood had been frozen out of the navy, and the internment camps were growing like boom towns. Yet other Germans somehow were granted an almost untrammeled freedom, and thousands who had avoided evil activity were tolerated throughout the war.

Sir Joseph kept retorting to suspicion with subscription. He took enormous quantities of the government loans. His contributions to the Red Cross and the multitudinous charities were more like endowments than gifts. How could Marie Louise be vile enough to suspect him?

Yet in spite of herself she resolved at last to refuse further messenger service. Then she learned that Nicky had left England and gone to America on most important financial business of a most confidential nature.

Marie Louise was too glad of her release to ask questions. She rejoiced that she had not insulted her foster-parents with mutiny, and she drudged at whatever war work the committees found for her. They found nothing very picturesque, but the more toilsome her labor was the more it served for absolution of any evil she might have done.

And now that the dilemma of loyalty was taken from her soul, her body surrendered weakly. She had time to fall ill. It was enough that she got her feet wet. Her convalescence was slow even in the high hills of Matlock.

The winter had passed, and the summer of 1916 had come before Marie Louise was herself. The Weblings had moved out to the country again; the flowers were back in the gardens; the deer and the birds were in their summer garb and mood. But now the house guests were all wounded soldiers and nurses. Sir Joseph had turned over his estate for a war hospital.

Lady Webling went among her visitors like a queen making her rounds. Sir Joseph squandered money on his distinguished company. Marie Louise joined them and took what comfort she could in such diminution of pain and such contributions

of war power as were permitted her. Those were the only legitimate happinesses in the world.

The tennis-courts were peopled now with players glad of one arm or one eye or even a demodeled face. On the golf-links crutched men hobbled. The horses in the stables bore only partial riders. The card-parties were squared by players using hands made by hand. The music-room resounded with five-finger improvisations and with vocalists who had little but their voices left. They howled, "Keep your head down, Fritzie boy," or, "We gave them hell at Neuve Chapelle, and here we are and here we are again," or moaned love-songs with a sardonic irony.

And the guests at tea! And the guests who could not come to tea!

Young Hawdon was there. "Well, Marie Louise," he had said, "I'm back from France, but not *in toto*. Fact is, I'm neither here nor there. Quite a sketchy party you have. But we'll charge it all to Germany, and some day we'll collect. Some day! Some day!" And he burst into song.

The wonder was that there was so much bravery. At times there was hilarity, but it was always close to tears.

The Weblings went back to London early and took Marie Louise with them. She wanted to stay with the poor soldiers, but Sir Joseph said that there was just as much for her to do in town. There was no lack of poor soldiers anywhere. Besides, he needed her, he said. This set her heart to plunging with the old fear. But he was querulous and irascible nowadays, and Lady Webling begged her not to excite him, for she was afraid of a paralysis. He had the look of a Damocles living under the sword.

The news from America was more encouraging to England and to the Americans in England. German spies were being arrested with amazing frequence. Ambassadors were floundering in hot water and setting up a large traffic in return-tickets. Even the trunks of certain "Americans" were searched—men and women who were amazed to learn that curious German documents had got mixed up in their own effects. Some most peculiar checks and receipts turned up.

It was shortly after a cloudy account of one of these trunk-raids had been published in the London papers that Sir Joseph had his first stroke of paralysis.

Sir Joseph was in pitiful case. His devotion to Marie Louise was heartbreaking. Her sympathy had not been exhausted, but schooled rather by its prolonged exercise, and she gave the forlorn old wretch a love and a tenderness that had been wrought to a fine art without losing any of its spontaneous reality.

At first he could move only a bit of the great bulk, sprawled like a snowdrift under the sheet. He was helpless as a shattered soldier, but slowly he won back his faculties and his members. The doors that were shut between his brain and his powers opened one by one, and he became a man again.

The first thing he wrote with his rediscovered right hand was his signature to a document his lawyer brought him after a consultation. It was a transfer of twenty thousand pounds in British war bonds, "for services rendered and other valuable considerations," to his dear daughter Marie Louise Webling.

When the warrant was handed to her with the bundle of securities, Marie Louise was puzzled, then shocked as the old man explained with his still uncertain lips. When she understood, she rejected the gift with horror. Sir Joseph pleaded with her in a thick speech that had relapsed to an earlier habit.

"I am theenkink how close I been by dyink. Du bist—zhoo are in my vwill, of coorse, but a man says, 'I vwill,' and some heirs says, 'You vwon't yet!' Better I should make sure of somethink."

"But I don't want money, papa—not like this. And I won't have you speak of wills and such odious things."

"You have been like our own daughter only more obeyink as poor Hedwig. You should not make me sick by to refuse."

She could only quiet him by accepting the wealth and bringing him the receipt for its deposit in a safe of her own.

When he was once more able to hoist his massive body to its feet and to walk to his own door, he said:

"*Mein*—my *Gott!* Look at the calendar once. It is nineteen seventeen already."

He ceased to be that simple, primitive thing, a sick man; he became again the financier. She heard of him anew on war-industry boards. She saw his name on lists of big subscriptions.

He began to talk anew of Nicky, and he spoke with unusual anxiety of U-boats. He hoped that they would have a bad week. There was no questioning his sincerity in this.

And one evening he came home in a womanish flurry. He pinched the ear of Marie Louise and whispered to her:

"Nicky is here in England—safe after the sea voyage. Be a nize girl, and you shall see him soon now."

CHAPTER IV

THE next morning Marie Louise, waking, found her windows opaque with fog. The gardens she usually looked over, glistening green all winter through, were gone, and in their place was a vast bale of sooty cotton packed so tight against the glass that her eyes could not pierce to the sill.

Marie Louise went down to breakfast in a room like a smoky tunnel where the lights burned sickly. She was in a murky and suffocating humor, but Sir Joseph was strangely content for the hour and the air. He ate with the zest of a boy on a holi-morn, and beckoned her into his study, where he confided to her great news:

"Nicky telephoned me. He brings wonderful news out of America. Big business he has done. He cannot come yet by our house, for even servants must not see him here. So you shall go and meet him. You take your own little car, and go most careful till you find Hyde Park gate. Inside you stop and get out to see if something is matter with the engine. A man is there—Nicky. He steps in the car. You get in and drive slowly—so slowly. Give him this letter—put in bosom of dress not to lose. He tells you maybe something, and he gives you envelop. Then he gets out, and you come home—but carefully. Don't let one of those buses run you over in the fog. I should not risk you if not most important."

Marie Louise pleaded illness, and fear of never finding the place. But Sir Joseph stared at her with such wonder and pain that she yielded hastily, took the envelop, folded it small, thrust it into her chest pocket and went out to the garage, where she could hardly bully the chauffeur into letting her take her own car. He put all the curtains on, and she pushed forth into obfuscation like a one-man submarine. There was something of the effect of moving along the floor

of the sea. The air was translucent, a little like water-depths, but everything was blur.

Luck was with her. She neither ran over nor was run over. But she was so tardy in finding the gate, and Nicky was so damp, so chilled, and so uneasy with the apparitions and the voices that had haunted him in the fog that he said nothing more cordial than:

"At last! So you come!"

He climbed in, shivering with cold or fear. And she ran the car a little farther into the nebulous depths. She gave him the letter from Sir Joseph and took from him another.

Nicky did not care to tarry.

"I should get back to my house with this devil's cold I've caught," he said. "Do you still have no sun in this bedamned England?"

The "you" struck Marie Louise as odd coming from a professed Englishman, even if he did lay the blame for his accent on years spent in German banking-houses.

"How did you find the United States?" Marie Louise asked, with a sudden qualm of homesickness.

"Those United States! Ha! United about what? Money!"

"I think you can get along better afoot," said Marie Louise, as she made a turn and slipped through the pillars of the gate.

"*Au refoir!*" said Nicky, and he dived out, slamming the door back of him.

That night there was one of Sir Joseph's dinners. But almost nobody came, except Lieutenant Hawdon and old Mr. Verrinder. Sir Joseph and Lady Webling seemed more frightened than insulted by the last-moment regrets of the guests. Was it an omen?

It was not many days before Sir Joseph asked Marie Louise to carry another envelop to Nicky. She went out alone, shuddering in the wet and edged air. She found the bench agreed on, and sat waiting, craven and mutinous. Nicky did not come, but another man passed her, looked searchingly, turned and came back to murmur under his lifted hat:

"Miss Webling?"

She gave him her stingiest "Yis."

"Mr. Easton asked me to meet you in his place, and explain."

"He is not coming?"

"He can't. He is ill. A bad cold only. He has a letter for you. Have you one for him?"

Marie Louise liked this man even less than she would have liked Nicky himself. She was alarmed, and showed it. The stranger said:

"I am Mr. von Gröner, a frient of—of Nicky's."

Marie Louise vibrated between shame and terror. But von Gröner's credentials were good; it was surely Nicky's hand that had penned the lines on the envelop. She took it reluctantly and gave him the letter she carried.

She hastened home. Sir Joseph was in a sad flurry, but he accepted the testimony of Nicky's autograph.

The next day Marie Louise must go on another errand. This time her envelop bore the name of Nicky and the added line, "*Kindness of Mr. von Gröner.*"

Von Gröner tried to question Marie Louise, but her wits were in an absolute maelstrom of terror. She was afraid of him, afraid that he represented Nicky, afraid that he did not, afraid that he was a real German, afraid that he was a pretended spy, or an English secret-service man. She was afraid of Sir Joseph and his wife, afraid to obey them or disobey them, to love them or hate them, betray them or be betrayed. She had lost all sense of direction, of impetus, of desire.

She saw that Sir Joseph and Lady Webling were in a state of panic, too. They smiled at her with a wan pity and fear. She caught them whispering often. She saw them cling together with a devotion that would have been a burlesque in a picture seen by strangers. It would have been almost as grotesque as a view of a hippopotamus and his mate cowering hugely together and nuzzling each other under the menace of a lightning-storm.

Marie Louise came upon them once comparing the envelop she had just brought with other letters of Nicky's. Sir Joseph slipped them into a book, then took one of them out cautiously and showed it to Marie Louise.

"Does that look really like the writink from Nicky?"

"Yes," she said, then, "No," then, "Of course," then, "I don't know."

Lady Webling said, "Sit down once, my child, and tell me just how this man von Gröner does, acts, speaks."

She told them. They quizzed her. She was afraid that

they would take her into their confidence, but they exchanged querying looks and signaled caution.

Sir Joseph said: "Strange how long Nicky stays sick, and his memory—little things he mixes up. I wonder is he dead yet. Who knows?"

"Dead?" Marie Louise cried. "Dead, and sends you letters?"

"Yes, but such a funny letter this last one is. I think I write him once more and ask him is he dead or crazy, maybe. Anyway, I think I don't feel so very good now—mamma and I take maybe a little journey. You come along with, yes?"

A rush of desperate gratitude to the only real people in her world led her to say:

"Whatever you want me to do is what I want to do—or wherever to go."

Lady Webling drew her to her breast, and Sir Joseph held her hand in one of his and patted it with the flabby other, mumbling:

"Yes, but what is it we want you to do?"

From his eyes came a scurry of tears that ran in panic among the folds of his cheeks. He shook them off and smiled, nodding and still patting her hand as he said:

"Better I write one letter more for Mr. von Gröner. I esk him to come himself after dark to-night now."

Marie Louise waited in her room, watching the sunlight die out of the west. She felt somehow as if she were a prisoner in the Tower, a princess waiting for the morrow's little visit to the scaffold. Or did the English shoot women, as Edith Cavell had been shot?

There was a knock at the door, but it was not the turnkey. It was the butler to murmur, "Dinner, please." She went down and joined mamma and papa at the table. There were no guests except Terror and Suspense, and both of them wore smiling masks and made no visible sign of their presence.

After dinner Marie Louise had her car brought round to the door. There was nothing surprising about that. Women had given up the ancient pretense that their respectability was something that must be policed by a male relative or squire except in broad daylight. Neither vice nor malaria was believed any longer to come from exposure to the night air; nor was virtue regarded like a sum of money that must not be

risked by being carried about alone after dark. It had been easy enough to lose under the old régime.

So Marie Louise launched out in her car much as a son of the family might have done. She drove to a little square too dingily middle class to require a policeman. She sounded her horn three squawks and swung open the door, and a man waiting under an appointed tree stepped from its shadow and into the shadow of the car before it stopped. She dropped into high speed and whisked out of the square.

"You have for me a message," said Mr. von Gröner.

"Yes. Sir Joseph wants to see you."

"Me?"

"Yes—at the house. We'll go there at once if you please."

"Certainly. Delighted. But Nicky—I ought to telephone him I shall be gone."

"Nicky is well enough to telephone?"

"Not to come to the telephone, but there is a servant. If you will please stop somewhere. I shall be a moment only."

Marie Louise felt that she ought not to stop, but she could hardly kidnap the man. So she drew up at a shop and von Gröner left her, her heart shaking her with a faint tremor like that of the engine of her car.

Von Gröner returned promptly, but he said: "I think we should not go too straight to your father's house. Might be we are followed. We can tell soon. Go in the park, please, and suddenly stop, turn round, and I look at what cars follow."

She let him command her. She was letting everybody command her; she had no destination, no North Star in her life. Von Gröner kept her dodging about Regent's Park till she grew angry.

"This seems rather silly, doesn't it? I am going home. Sir Joseph has worries enough without—"

"Ah, he has worries?"

She did not answer. The eagerness in his voice did not please her. He kept up a rain of questions, too, but she answered them all by referring him to Sir Joseph.

At last they reached the house. As they got out, two men closed in on the car and peered into their faces. Von Gröner snapped at them, and they fell back.

Marie Louise had taken along her latchkey. She opened the door herself and led von Gröner to Sir Joseph's room.

As she lifted her hand to knock she heard Lady Webling weeping frantically, crying out something incoherent. Marie Louise fell back and motioned von Gröner away, but he pushed the door open and, taking her by the elbow, thrust her forward.

Lady Webling stopped short with a wail. Sir Joseph, who had been trying to quiet her by patting her hand, paused with his palm uplifted.

Before Marie Louise could speak she saw that the old couple was not alone. By the mantel stood Mr. Verrinder. By the door, almost touching Marie Louise, was a tall, grim person she had not seen. He closed the door behind von Gröner and Marie Louise.

Mr. Verrinder said, "Be good enough to sit down." To von Gröner he said, "How are you, Bickford?"

CHAPTER V

SIR JOSEPH was staring at the new-comer, and his German nativity told him what Marie Louise had not been sure of, that von Gröner was no German. When Verrinder gave him an English name it shook Marie Louise with a new dismay. Sir Joseph turned from the man to Marie Louise and demanded:

"Marie Louise, you ditt not theenk this man is a Cherman?"

This one more shame crushed Marie Louise. She dropped into a chair, appealing feebly to the man she had retrieved:

"Your name is not von Gröner?"

Bickford grinned. "Well, in a manner of speakin'. You might say it's my pen-name. Not that I've ever been in the pen—except with Nicky."

"Nicky is in the— He's not ill?"

"Well, he's a bit sick. He was a bit seasick to start with, and when we gave him the collar—well, he doesn't like his room."

"But his letters—" Marie Louise pleaded, her fears racing ahead of her questions.

"I was always a hand at forgery, but I thought best to turn it to the aid of me country. I'm proud if you liked me work. The last ones were not up to the mark. I was hurried, and Nicky was ugly. He refused to answer any more questions. I had to do it all on me own. Ahfterwards I found I had made a few mistakes."

When Marie Louise realized that this man had been calmly taking the letters addressed to Nicky and answering them in his feigned script to elicit further information from Sir Joseph and enmesh him further, she dropped her hands at her sides, feeling not only convicted of crime, but of imbecility as well.

Sir Joseph and Lady Webling spread their hands and drew up their shoulders in surrender and gave up hope of bluff.

Verrinder wanted to be merciful and avoid any more climaxes.

"You see it's all up, Sir Joseph, don't you?" he said.

Sir Joseph drew himself again as high as he could, though the burden of his flesh kept pulling him down. He did not answer.

"Come now, Sir Joseph, be a sport."

"The Englishman's releechion," sneered Sir Joseph, "to be *ein Sportmann*."

"Oh, I know you can t understand it," said Verrinder. "It seems to be untranslatable into German—just as we can't seem to understand *Germanity* except that it is the antonym of *humanity*. You fellows have no boyhood literature, I am told, no Henty or Hughes or Scott to fill you with ideas of fair play. You have no games to teach you. One really can't blame you for being such rotters, any more than one can blame a Kaffir for not understanding cricket.

"But sport aside, use your intelligence, old man. I've laid my cards on the table—enough of them, at least. We've trumped every trick, and we've all the trumps outstanding. You have a few high cards up your sleeve. Why not toss them on the table and throw yourselves on the mercy of his Majesty?"

The presence of Marie Louise drove the old couple to a last battle for her faith. Lady Webling stormed, "All what you accuse us is lies, lies!"

Verrinder grew stern:

"Lies, you say? We have you, and your daughter—also Nicky. We have—well, I'll not annoy you with their names. Over in the States they have a lot more of you fellows.

"You and Sir Joseph have lived in this country for years and years. You have grown fat—I mean to say rich—upon our bounty. We have loved and trusted you. His Majesty has given you both marks of his most gracious favor."

"We paid well for that," sneered Lady Webling.

"Yes, I fancy you did—but with English pounds and pence that you gained with the help of British wits and British freedom. You have contributed to charities, yes, and handsomely, too, but not entirely without the sweet usages of advertisement. You have not hidden that part of your bookkeeping from the public.

"But the rest of your books—you don't show those. We know a ghastly lot about them, and it is not pretty, my dear lady. I had hoped you would not force us to publish those transactions. You have plotted the destruction of the British Empire; you have conspired to destroy ships in dock and at sea; you have sent God knows how many lads to their death—and women and children, too. You have helped to blow up munitions-plants, and on your white heads is the blood of many and many a poor wretch torn to pieces at his lathe. You have made widows of women and orphans of children who never heard of you, nor you of them. Nor have you cared—or dared—to inquire.

"Sir Joseph has been perfecting a great scheme to buy up what munitions-plants he could in this country in order to commit sabotage and slow up the production of the ammunition our troops are crying for. He has plotted with others to send defective shells that will rip up the guns they do not fit, and powders that will explode too soon or not at all. God! to think that the lives of our brave men and the life of our Empire should be threatened by such people as you!

"And in the American field Sir Joseph has connived with a syndicate to purchase factories, to stop production at the source, since your U-boats and your red-handed diplomatic spies cannot stop it otherwise. Your agents have corrupted a few of the Yankees, and killed others, and would have killed more if the name of your people had not become such a horror even in that land where millions of Germans live that every proffer is suspect.

"You see, we know you, Lady Webling and Sir Joseph. We have watched you all the while from the very first, and we know that you are not innocent even of complicity in the supreme infamy of luring the *Lusitania* to her death."

He was quivering with the rush of his emotions over the broken dam of habitual reticence.

Lady Webling and Sir Joseph had quivered, too, less under the impact of his denunciation than in the confusion of their own exposure to themselves and to Marie Louise.

They had watched her eyes as she heard Mr. Verrinder's philippic. They had seen her pass from incredulity to belief. They had seen her glance at them and glance away in fear of them.

This broke them utterly, for she was utterly dear to them. She was dearer than their own flesh and blood. She had replaced their dead. She had been born to them without pain, without infancy, born full grown in the prime of youth and beauty. They had watched her love grow to a passion, and their own had grown with it.

What would she do now? She was the judge they feared above England. They awaited her sentence.

Her eyes wandered to them and searched them through. At first, under the spell of Verrinder's denunciation, she saw them as two bloated fiends, their hands dripping blood, their lips framed to lies, their brains to cunning and that synonym for Germanism, *ruthlessness*—the word the Germans chose, as their Kaiser chose Huns for an ideal.

But she looked again. She saw the pleading in their eyes. Their very uncomeliness besought her mercy. After all, she had seen none of the things Verrinder described. The only real things to her, the only things she knew of her own knowledge, were the goodnesses of these two. They were her parents. And now for the first time they needed her. The mortgage their generosity had imposed on her had fallen due.

How could she at the first unsupported obloquy of a stranger turn against them? Her first loyalty was due to them, and no other loyalty was under test. Something swept her to her feet. She ran to them and, as far as she could, gathered them into her arms. They wept like two children whom reproaches have hardened into defiance, but whom kindness has melted.

Verrinder watched the spectacle with some surprise and not altogether with scorn. Whatever else Miss Webling was, she was a good sport. She stuck to her team in defeat.

He said, not quite harshly, "So, Miss Webling, you cast your lot with them."

"I do."

"Do you believe that what I said was true?'

"No."

"Really, you should be careful. Those messages you carried incriminate you."

"I suppose they do, though I never knew what was in them. No, I'll take that back. I'm not trying to crawl out of it."

"Then since you confess so much, I shall have to ask you to come with them."

"To the—the Tower of London?"

"The car is ready."

Marie Louise was stabbed with fright. She seized the doomed twain in a faster embrace.

"What are you going to do with these poor souls?"

"Their souls my dear Miss Webling, are outside our jurisdiction."

"With their poor bodies, then?"

"I am not a judge or a jury, Miss Webling. Everything will be done with propriety. They will not be torpedoed in midocean without warning. They will have the full advantage of the British law to the last."

That awful word jarred them all. But Sir Joseph was determined to make a good end. He drew himself up with another effort.

"Excuse, pleass, Mr. Verrinder—might it be we should take with us a few little things?"

"Of course."

"Thang gyou." He bowed and turned to go, taking his wife and Marie Louise by the arm, for mutual support.

"If you don't mind, I'll come along," said Mr. Verrinder.

Sir Joseph nodded. The three went heavily up the grandiose stairway as if a gibbet waited at the top. They went into Sir Joseph's room, which adjoined that of his wife. Mr. Verrinder paused on the sill somewhat shyly:

"This is a most unpleasant task, but—"

Marie Louise hesitated, smiling gruesomely.

"My room is across the hall. You can hardly be in both places at once, can you?"

"I fancy I can trust you—especially as the house is surrounded. If you don't mind joining us later."

Marie Louise went to her room. Her maid was there in a palsy of fear. The servants had not dared apply themselves to the keyholes, but they knew that the master was visited by the police and that a cordon was drawn about the house.

The aspen girl offered her help to Marie Louise, wondering if she would compromise herself with the law, but incapable of deserting so good a mistress even at such a crisis. Marie Louise thanked her and told her to go to bed, compelled her

to leave. Then she set about the dreary task of selecting a few necessaries—a nightgown, an extra day gown, some linen, some silver, and a few brushes. She felt as if she were laying out her own grave-clothes, and that she would need little and not need that little long.

She threw a good-by look, a long, sweeping, caressing glance, about her castle, and went across the hall, lugging her hand-bag. Before she entered Sir Joseph's room she knocked.

It was Mr. Verrinder that answered, "Come in."

He was seated in a chair, dejected and making himself as inoffensive as possible. Lady Webling had packed her own bag and was helping the helpless Sir Joseph find the things he was looking for in vain, though they were right before him. Marie Louise saw evidences that a larger packing had already been done. Verrinder had surprised them, about to flee.

Sir Joseph was ready at last. He was closing his bag when he took a last glance, and said:

"My toot'-brush and powder."

He went to his bathroom cabinet, and there he saw in the little apothecary-shop a bottle of tablets prescribed for him during his illness. It was conspicuously labeled "*Poison.*"

He stood staring at the bottle so long in such fascination that Lady Webling came to the door to say:

"Vat is it you could not find now, papa?"

She leaned against the edge of the casement, and he pointed to the bottle. Their eyes met, and in one long look they passed through a brief Gethsemane. No words were exchanged. She nodded. He took the bottle from the shelf stealthily, unscrewed the top, poured out a heap of tablets and gave them to her, then poured another heap into his fat palm.

"*Prosit!*" he said, and they flung the venom into their throats. It was brackish merely from the coating, but they could not swallow all the pellets. He filled a glass of water at the faucet and handed it to his wife. She quaffed enough to get the pellets down her resisting throat, and handed the glass to him.

They remained staring at each other, trying to crowd into their eyes an infinity of strange passionate messages, though their features were all awry with nausea and the premonition of lethal pains.

Verrinder began to wonder at their delay. He was about to rise. Marie Louise went to the door anxiously. Sir Joseph mumbled:

"Look once, my darlink. I find some bong-bongs. Vould you like, yes?"

With a childish canniness he held the bottle so that she could see the skull and cross-bones and the word beneath.

Marie Louise, not realizing that they had already set out on the adventure, gave a stifled cry and snatched at the bottle. It fell to the floor with a crash, and the tablets leaped here and there like tiny white beetles. Some of them ran out into the room and caught Verrinder's eye.

Before he could reach the door Sir Joseph had said, triumphantly, to Marie Louise:

"Mamma and I did eat already. Too bad you do not come vit. *Adé, Töchterchen. Lebewohl!*"

He was reaching his awkward arms out to clasp her when Verrinder burst into the homely scene of their tragedy. He caught up the broken bottle and saw the word "*Poison.*" Beneath were the directions, but no word of description, no mention of the antidote.

"What is this stuff?" Verrinder demanded, in a frenzy of dread and wrath and self-reproach.

"I don't know," Marie Louise stammered.

Verrinder repeated his demand of Sir Joseph.

"*Weiss nit,*" he mumbled, beginning to stagger as the serpent struck its fangs into his vitals.

Verrinder ran out into the hall and shouted down the stairs:

"Bickford, telephone for a doctor, in God's name—the nearest one. Send out to the nearest chemist and fetch him on the run—with every antidote he has. Send somebody down to the kitchen for warm water, mustard, coffee."

There was a panic below, but Marie Louise knew nothing except the swirling tempest of her own horror. Sir Joseph and Lady Webling, blind with torment, wrung and wrenched with spasms of destruction, groped for each other's hands and felt their way through clouds of fire to a resting-place.

Marie Louise could give them no help, but a little guidance toward the bed. They fell upon it—and after a hideous while they died.

CHAPTER VI

THE physician arrived too late—physicians were hard to get for civilians. While he was being hunted down and brought in, Verrinder fought an unknown poison with what antidotes he could improvise, and saw that they merely added annoyance to agony.

His own failure had been unnerving. He had pursued this eminent couple for months, trying in vain to confirm suspicion by proof and strengthen assurance with evidence, and always delaying the blow in the hope of gathering in still more of Germany's agents. At last he had thrown the slowly woven net about the Weblings and revealed them to themselves as prisoners of his cunning. Then their souls slipped out through the meshes, leaving their useless empty bodies in his care, their bodies and the soul and body of the young woman who was involved in their guilt.

Verrinder did not relish the story the papers would make of it. So he and the physician devised a statement for the press to the effect that the Weblings died of something they had eaten. The stomach of Europe was all deranged, and Sir Joseph had been famous for his dinners; there was a kind of ironic logic in his epitaph.

Verrinder left the physician to fabricate and promulgate the story and keep him out of it. Then he addressed himself to the remaining prisoner, Miss Marie Louise Webling.

He had no desire to display this minnow as his captive after the whales had got away, but he hoped to find her useful in solving some of the questions the Weblings had left unanswered when they bolted into eternity. Besides, he had no intention of letting Marie Louise escape to warn the other conspirators and to continue her nefarious activities.

His first difficulty was not one of frightening Miss Webling into submission, but of soothing her into coherence. She had loved the old couple with a filial passion, and the sight

of their last throes had driven her into a frenzy of grief. She needed the doctor's care before Verrinder could talk to her at all. The answers he elicited from her hysteria were full of contradiction, of evident ignorance, of inaccuracy, of folly. But so he had found all human testimony; for these three things are impossible to mankind: to see the truth, to remember it, and to tell it.

When first Marie Louise came out of the avalanche of her woes, it was she who began the questioning. She went up and down the room disheveled, tear-smirched, wringing her hands and beating her breast till it hurt Verrinder to watch her brutality to that tender flesh.

"What—what does it mean?" she sobbed. "What have you done to my poor papa and mamma? Why did you come here?"

"Surely you must know."

"What do I know? Only that they were good sweet people."

"Good sweet spies!"

"Spies! Those poor old darlings?"

"Oh, I say—really, now, you surely can't have the face, the insolence, to—"

"I haven't any insolence. I haven't anything but a broken heart."

"How many hearts were broken—how many hearts were stopped, do you suppose, because of your work?"

"My what?"

"I refer to the lives that you destroyed."

"I—I destroyed lives? Which one of us is going mad?"

"Oh, come, now, you knew what you were doing. You were glad and proud for every poor fellow you killed."

"It's you, then, that are mad." She stared at him in utter fear. She made a dash for the door. He prevented her. She fell back and looked to the window. He took her by the arm and twisted her into a chair. He had seen hysteria quelled by severity. He stood over her and spoke with all the sternness of his stern soul.

"You will gain nothing by trying to make a fool of me. You carried messages for those people. The last messages you took you delivered to one of our agents."

Her soul refused her even self-defense. She could only stammer the fact, hardly believing it as she put it forth:

"I didn't know what was in the letters. I never knew."

Verrinder was disgusted by such puerile defense:

"What did you think was in them, then?"

"I had no idea. Papa—Sir Joseph didn't take me into his confidence."

"But you knew that they were secret."

"He told me that they were—that they were business messages—secret financial transactions."

"Transactions in British lives—oh, they were that! And you knew it."

"I did not know it! I did not know it! I did not know it!"

She realized too late that the strength of the retort suffered by its repetition. It became nonsense on the third iterance. She grew afraid even to defend herself.

Seeing how frightened she was at bay, Mr. Verrinder forebore to drive her to distraction.

"Very well, you did not know what the messages contained. But why did you consent to such sneaking methods? Why did you let them use you for such evident deceit?"

"I was glad to be of use to them. They had been so good to me for so long. I was used to doing as I was told. I suppose it was gratitude."

It was then that Mr. Verrinder delivered himself of his bitter opinion of gratitude, which has usually been so well spoken of and so rarely berated for excess.

"Gratitude is one of the evils of the world. I fancy that few other emotions have done more harm. In moderation it has its uses, but in excess it becomes vicious. It is a form of voluntary servitude; it absolutely destroys all respect for public law; it is the foundation of tyrannies; it is the secret of political corruption; it is the thing that holds dynasties together, family despotism; it is soul-mortgage, bribery. It is a monster of what the Americans call graft. It is chloroform to the conscience, to patriotism, to every sense of public duty. 'Scratch my back, and I am your slave'—that's gratitude."

Mr. Verrinder rarely spoke at such length or with such apothegm.

Marie Louise was a little more dazed than ever to hear gratitude denounced. She was losing all her bearings. Next he demanded:

"But admitting that you were duped by your gratitude, how did it happen that your curiosity never led you to inquire into the nature of those messages?"

"I respected Sir Joseph beyond all people. I supposed that what he did was right. I never knew it not to be. And then—well, if I did wonder a little once in a while, I thought I'd better mind my own business."

Verrinder had his opinion of this, too. "Minding your own business! That's another of those poisonous virtues. Minding your own business leads to pacifism, malevolent neutrality, selfishness of every sort. It's death to charity and public spirit. Suppose the Good Samaritan had minded his own business! But— Well, this is getting us no forwarder with you. You carried those messages, and never felt even a woman's curiosity about them! You met Nicky Easton often, and never noted his German accent, never suspected that he was not the Englishman he pretended to be. Is that true?"

He saw by the wild look in her eyes and their escape from his own that he had scored a hit. He did not insist upon her acknowledging it.

"And your only motive was gratitude?"

"Yes, sir."

"You never asked any pay for it?"

"No, sir."

"You never received anything for it?"

"No, sir."

"We find the record of a transfer to you of securities for some twenty thousand pounds. Why was that given you?"

"It—it was just out of generosity. Sir Joseph said he was afraid I might be—that his will might be broken, and—"

"Ah! you discussed his will with him, then?"

She was horrified at his implication. She cried, "Oh, I begged him not to, but he insisted."

"He said there were other heirs and they might contest his will. Did he mention the heirs?"

"No, sir. I don't think so. I don't remember that he did."

"He did not by any chance refer to the other grandparents of the two children? Mr. and Mrs. Oakby, the father and mother of the father of Victor and Bettina?"

"He didn't refer to them, I'm sure. Yes, I am quite sure."

"Did he say that his money would be left in trust for his grandchildren?"

"No."

"And he gave you twenty thousand pounds just out of generosity?"

"Yes. Yes, Mr. Verrinder."

"It was a fairish amount of money for messenger fees, wasn't it? And it came to you while you were carrying those letters to Nicky?"

"No! Sir Joseph had been ill. He had had a stroke of paralysis."

"And you were afraid he might have another?"

"No!"

"You were not afraid of that?"

"Yes, of course I was, but— What are you trying to make me say—that I went to him and demanded the money?"

"That idea occurs to you, does it?"

She writhed with disgust at the suggestion. Yet it had a clammy plausibility. Mr. Verrinder went on:

"These messages, you say, concerned a financial transaction?"

"So papa told me."

"And you believed him?"

"Naturally."

"You never doubted him?"

All the tortures of doubt that had assailed her recurred to her now and paralyzed her power to utter the ringing denial that was needed. He went on:

"Didn't it strike you as odd that Sir Joseph should be willing to pay you twenty thousand pounds just to carry messages concerning some mythical business?"

She did not answer. She was afraid to commit herself to anything. Every answer was a trap. Verrinder went on: "Twenty thousand pounds is a ten-per-centum commission on two hundred thousand pounds. That was rather a largish transaction to be carried on through secret letters, eh? Nicky Easton was not a millionaire, was he? Now I ask you, should you think of him as a Rothschild? Or was he, do you think, acting as agent for some one else, perhaps, and if so, for whom?"

She answered none of these. They were based on the assumption that she had put forward herself. She could find nothing to excuse her. Verrinder was simply playing tag with her. As soon as he touched her he ran away and came at her from another direction.

"Of course, we know that you were only the adopted daughter of Sir Joseph. But where did you first meet him?"

"In Berlin."

The sound of that word startled her. That German name stood for all the evils of the time. It was the inaccessible throne of hell.

Verrinder was startled by it, too.

"In Berlin!" he exclaimed, and nodded his head. "Now we are getting somewhere. Would you mind telling me the circumstances?"

She blushed a furious scarlet.

"I—I'd rather not."

"I must insist."

"Please send me to the Tower and have me imprisoned for life. I'd rather be there than here. Or better yet—have me shot. It would make me happier than anything you could do."

"I'm afraid that your happiness is not the main object of the moment. Will you be so good as to tell me how you met Sir Joseph in—in Berlin."

Marie Louise drew a deep breath. The past that she had tried to smother under a new life must be confessed at such a time of all times!

"Well, you know that Sir Joseph had a daughter; the two children up-stairs are hers, and—and what's to become of them, in Heaven's name?"

"One problem at a time, if you don't mind. Sir Joseph had a daughter. That would be Mrs. Oakby."

"Yes. Her husband died before her second baby was born, and she died soon after. And Sir Joseph and Lady Webling mourned for her bitterly, and—well, a year or so later they were traveling on the Continent—in Germany, they were, and one night they went to the Winter Garten in Berlin—the big music-hall, you know. Well, they were sitting far back, and an American team of musicians came on—the Musical Mokes, we were called."

"We?"

She bent her head in shame. "I was one of them. I played a xylophone and a saxophone and an accordion—all sorts of things. Well, Lady Webling gave a little gasp when she saw me, and she looked at Sir Joseph—so she told me afterward—and then they got up and stole 'way up front just as I left the stage—to make a quick change, you know. I came back—in tights, playing a big trombone, prancing round and making an awful noise. Lady Webling gave a little scream; nobody heard her because I made a loud blat on the trombone in the ear of the black-face clown, and he gave a shriek and did a funny fall, and—"

"But, pardon me—why did Lady Webling scream?"

"Because I looked like her dead daughter. It was so horrible to see her child come out of the grave in—in tights, blatting a trombone at a clown in that big variety theater."

"I can quite understand. And then—"

"Well, Sir Joseph came round to the stage door and sent in his card. The man who brought it grinned and told everybody an old man was smitten on me; and Ben, the black-face man, said, 'I'll break his face,' but I said I wouldn't see him.

"Well, when I was dressed and leaving the theater with the black-face man, you know, Sir Joseph was outside. He stopped me and said: 'My child! My child!' and the tears ran down his face. I stopped, of course, and said, 'What's the matter now?' And he said, 'Would you come with me?' and I said, 'Not in a thousand years, old Creepo Christmas!' And he said: 'My poor wife is in the carriage at the curb. She wants to speak to you.' And then of course I had to go, and she reached out and dragged me in and wept all over me. I thought they were both crazy, but finally they explained, and they asked me to go to their hotel with them. So I told Ben to be on his way, and I went.

"Well, they asked me a lot of questions, and I told them a little—not everything, but enough, Heaven knows. And they begged me to be their daughter. I thought it would be pretty stupid, but they said they couldn't stand the thought of their child's image going about as I was, and I wasn't so stuck on the job myself—odd, how the old language comes back, isn't it? I haven't heard any of it for

so long I'd almost forgotten it." She passed her handkerchief across her lips as if to rub away a bad taste. It left the taste of tears. She sighed: "Well, they adopted me, and I learned to love them. And—and that's all."

"And you learned to love their native country, too, I fancy."

"At first I did like Germany pretty well. They were crazy about us in Berlin. I got my first big money and notices and attention there. You can imagine it went to my head. But then I came to England and tried to be as English as I could, so as not to be conspicuous. I never wanted to be conspicuous off the stage—or on it, for that matter. I even took lessons from the man who had the sign up, you remember, 'Americans taught to speak English!' I always had a gift for foreign languages, and I got to thinking in English, too."

"One moment, please. Did you say 'Americans taught?' Americans?"

"Yes."

"You're not American?"

"Why, of course!"

"Damned stupid of me!"

Verrinder frowned. This complicated matters. He had cornered her, only to have her abscond into neutral territory. He had known that Marie Louise was an adopted child, but had not suspected her Americanism. This required a bit of thinking. While he studied it in the back room of his brain his forehead self was saying:

"So Sir Joseph befriended you, and that was what won your amazing, unquestioning gratitude?"

"That and a thousand thousand little kindnesses. I loved them like mother and father."

"But your own—er—mother and father—you must have had parents of your own—what was their nationality?"

"Oh, they were, as we say, 'Americans from 'way back.' But my father left my mother soon after I was born. We weren't much good, I guess. It was when I was a baby. He was very restless, they say. I suppose I got my runaway nature from him. But I've outgrown that. Anyway, he left my mother with three children. My little brother died. My mother was a seamstress in a little town out West—an awful hole it was. I was a tiny little girl when they took me to

my mother's funeral. I remember that, but I can't remember her. That was my first death. And now this! I've lost a mother and father twice. That hasn't happened to many people. So you must forgive me for being so crazy. So many of my loved are dead. It's frightful. We lose so many as we grow up. Life is like walking through a graveyard, with the sextons always busy opening new places. There was so much crying and loneliness before, and now this war goes on and on—as if we needed a war!"

"God knows, we don't."

Marie Louise went to the window and raised the curtain. A haggard gray light had been piping the edges of the shade. Now the full casement let in a flood of warm morning radiance.

The dull street was alive again. Sparrows were hopping. Wagons were on the move. Small and early tradesfolk were about their business. Servants were opening houses as shops were being opened in town.

The big wheel had rolled London round into the eternal day. Doors and windows were being flung ajar. Newspapers and milk were taken in, ashes put out, cats and dogs released, front stoops washed, walks swept, gardens watered. Brooms were pendulating. In the masters' rooms it was still night and slumber-time, but humble people were alert.

The morning after a death is a fearful thing. Those papers on the steps across the way were doubtless loaded with more tragedies from the front, and among the cruel facts was the lie that concealed the truth about the Weblings, who were to read no more morning papers, eat no more breakfasts, set out on no more journeys.

Grief came to Marie Louise now with a less brackish taste. Her sorrow had the pity of the sunlight on it. She wept not now for the terror and hatefulness of the Weblings' fate, but for the beautiful things that would bless them no more, for the roses that would glow unseen, the flowers that would climb old walls and lean out unheeded, asking to be admired and proffering fragrance in payment of praise. The Weblings were henceforth immune to the pleasant rumble of wagons in streets, to the cheery good mornings of passers-by, the savor of coffee in the air, the luscious colors of fruits piled upon silver dishes.

Then she heard a scamper of bare feet, the squeals of mischief-making children escaping from a pursuing nurse.

It had been a favorite pastime of Victor and Bettina to break in upon Marie Louise of mornings when she forgot to lock her door. They loved to steal in barefoot and pounce on her with yelps of savage delight and massacre her, pull her hair and dance upon her bed and on her as she pleaded for mercy.

She heard them coming now, and she could not reach the door before it opened and disclosed the grinning, tousle-curled cherubs in their sleeping-suits.

They darted in, only to fall back in amazement. Marie Louise was not in bed. The bed had not been slept in. Marie Louise was all dressed, and she had been crying. And in a chair sat a strange, formidable old gentleman who looked tired and forlorn.

"Auntie!" they gasped.

She dropped to her knees, and they ran to her for refuge from the strange man.

She hugged them so hard that they cried, "Don't!"

Without in the least understanding what it was all about, they heard her saying to the man:

"And now what's to become of these poor lambs?"

The old stranger passed a slow gray hand across his dismal face and pondered.

The children pointed, then remembered that it is impolite to point, and drew back their little index hands and whispered:

"Auntie, what you up so early for?" and, "Who is that?"

And she whispered, "'S-h-h!"

Being denied the answer to this charade, they took up a new interest.

"I wonder is grandpapa up, too, and all dressed," said Victor.

"And maybe grandmamma," Bettina shrilled.

"I'll beat you to their room," said Victor.

Marie Louise seized them by their hinder garments as they fled.

"You must not bother them."

"Why not?" said Victor.

"Will so!" said Bettina, pawing to be free.

Marie Louise implored: "Please, please! They've gone."

"Where?"

She cast her eyes up at that terrible query, and answered it vaguely.

"Away."

"They might have told a fellow good-by," Victor brooded.

"They—they forgot, perhaps."

"I don't think that was very nice of them," Bettina pouted.

Victor was more cheerful. "Perhaps they did; perhaps they kissed us while we was asleep—*were* asleep."

Bettina accepted with delight.

"Seems to me I 'member somebody kissin' me. Yes, I 'member now."

Victor was skeptical. "Maybe you only had a dream about it."

"What else is there?" said Mr. Verrinder, rising and patting Victor on the shoulder. "You'd better run along to your tubs now."

They recognized the authority in his voice and obeyed.

The children took their beauty with them, but left their destiny to be arranged by higher powers, the gods of Eld.

"What is to become of them," Louise groaned again, "when I go to prison?"

Verrinder was calm. "Sir Joseph's will doubtless left the bulk of his fortune to them. That will provide for their finances. And they have two grandparents left. The Oakbys will surely be glad to take the children in, especially as they will come with such fortunes."

"You mean that I am to have no more to do with them?"

"I think it would be best to remove them to a more strictly English influence."

This hurt her horribly. She grew impatient for the finishing blow.

"And now that they are disposed of, have you decided what's to become of me?"

"It is not for me to decide. By the by, have you any one to represent you or intercede for you here, or act as your counsel in England?"

She shook her head. "A good many people have been very nice to me, of course. I've noticed, though, that even they grew cold and distant of late. I'd rather die than ask any of them."

"But have you no relatives living—no one of importance in the States who could vouch for you?"

She shook her head with a doleful humility.

"None of our family were ever important that I ever heard of, though of course one never knows what relatives are lurking about. Mine will never claim me; that's certain. I did have a sister—poor thing!—if she's alive. We didn't get along very well. I was too wild and restless as a girl. She was very good, hard-working, simple, homely as sin—or homely as virtue. I was all for adventure. I've had my fill of it. But once you begin it, you can't stop when you've had enough. If she's not dead, she's probably married and living under another name—Heaven knows what name or where. But I could find her, perhaps. I'd love to go to her. She was a very good girl. She's probably married a good man and has brought up her children piously, and never mentioned me. I'd only bring disgrace on her. She'd disown me if I came home with this cloud of scandal about me."

"No one shall know of this scandal unless you tell."

She laughed harshly, with a patronizing superiority.

"Really, Mr. Verrinder, did you ever know a secret to be kept?"

"This one will be."

She laughed again at him, then at herself.

He rose wearily. "I think I shall have to be getting along. I haven't had a bath or a shave to-day. I shall ask you to keep to your room and deny yourself to all visitors. I won't ask you to promise not to escape. If the guard around the house is not capable of detaining you, you're welcome to your freedom, though I warn you that England is as hard to get out of as to get into nowadays. Whatever you do, for your own sake, at least, keep this whole matter secret and stick to the story we agreed on. Good morning!"

He bowed himself out. No rattling of chains marked his closing of the door, but if he had been a turnkey in Newgate he could not have left Marie Louise feeling more a prisoner. Her room was her body's jail, but her soul was in a dungeon, too.

As Verrinder went down the hall he scattered a covey of whispering servants.

The nurse who had waited to seize the children when they

came forth had left them to dress themselves while she hastened to publish in the servants' dining-room the appalling fact that she had caught sight of a man in Miss Marie Louise's room. The other servants had many other even more astounding things to tell—to wit: that after mysterious excitements about the house, with strange men going and coming, and the kitchen torn to pieces for mustard and warm milk and warm water and strong coffee, and other things, Sir Joseph and Lady Webling were no more, and the whole household staff was out of a job. Strange police-like persons were in the house, going through all the papers in Sir Joseph's room. The servants could hardly wait to get out with the gossip.

And Mr. Verrinder had said that this secret would be kept!

CHAPTER VII

SOMEWHERE along about this time, though there is no record of the exact date—and it was in a shabby home in a humble town where dates made little difference—a homely woman sniffed.

Her name was Mrs. Nuddle.

What Mrs. Nuddle was sniffing at was a page of fashion cartoons, curious human hieroglyphs that women can read and run to buy. Highly improbable garments were sketched on utterly impossible figures—female eels who could crawl through their own garters, eels of strange mottlings, with heads like cranberries, feet like thorns, and no spines at all.

Mrs. Nuddle was as opposite in every way as could be. She could not have crawled through her own washtub if she had knocked the bottom out of it. She was a caricature made by nature and long, hard work, and she laughed at the caricatures devised by art in a hurry.

She was about to cast the paper aside as a final rebuke when she caught sight of portraits of real people of fashion. They did not look nearly so fashionable as the cartoons, but they were at least possible. Some of them were said to be prominent in charity; most of them were prominent out of their corsages.

Now Mrs. Nuddle sniffed at character, not at caricature. Leaning against her washtub and wringer, both as graceful as their engineer, she indulged herself in the pitiful but unfailing solace of the poor and the ugly, which is to attribute to the rich dishonesty and to the beautiful wickedness.

The surf Mrs. Nuddle had raised in the little private sea of her tub had died down, and a froth of soap dried on the rawhide of her big forearms as her heifer eyes roamed the newspaper-gallery of portraits. One sudsy hand supported and suppressed her smile of ridicule. These women, belles and swells, were all as glossy as if they had been ironed.

Mrs. Nuddle sneered: "If the hussies would do an honest day's work it would be better for their figgers." She was mercifully oblivious of the fact that her tub-callisthenics had made her no more exquisite than a cow in a kimono.

Mrs. Nuddle scorned the lily-fingered tulip-fleshed beauties. Their sentimental alarms had nothing in common with her problem, which was the riddle of a husband who was faithful only to the bottle, who was indifferent to the children he got so easily, and was poetical only in that he never worked save when the mood was on him.

Again Mrs. Nuddle made to cast aside the paper that had come into her home wrapped round a bundle of laundry. But now she was startled, and she would have startled anybody who might have been watching her, for she stared hard at a photographed beauty and gasped:

"Sister!"

She in her disordered garb, unkempt, uncorseted, and uncommonly common, greeted with the word "Sister!" the photograph of a very young, very beautiful, very gracile creature, in a mannish costume that emphasized her femininity, in a foreign garden, in a braw hat with curls cascading from under it, with a throat lilying out of a flaring collar, with hands pocketed in a smart jacket, and below that a pair of most fashionable legs in riding-breeches and puttees! She carried not a parasol nor a riding-crop, but a great reaping-hook swung across her shoulder, and she smiled as impudently, as immortally, as if she were Youth and had slain old Time and carried off his scythe.

The picture did not reply to Mrs. Nuddle's cry, but Mrs. Nuddle's eldest daughter, a precocious little adventuress of eleven or so, who was generally called "Sister," turned from the young brother whose smutty face she was just smacking and snapped:

"Aw, whatcha want?"

Little Sister supposed that her irritating mother was going to tell her to stop doing something, or to start doing something—either of which behests she always hated and only obeyed because her mother was bigger than she was. She turned and saw her mother swaying and clutching at the air. Sister had a gorgeous hope that mother would fall into the tub and be interesting for once. But mother was a born

disappointer. She shook off the promising swoon, righted herself, and began fiercely to scan the paper to find out whose name the picture bore. The caption was torn off.

Being absolutely sure who it was, she wanted to find out who it really was.

In her frantic curiosity she remembered that her husband had stripped off a corner of the paper, dipped it in the stove, lighted his pipe with it, thrown it flaming on the floor, spat it out with practised accuracy, and trodden it as he went away. Mrs. Nuddle ran to pick it up.

On the charred remnant she read:

The Beautiful Miss . . . . .
One of London's reigning beaut . . . . .
daughter of Sir Joseph W. . . . .
doing farm work on the estate in . . . . .

Mrs. Nuddle sniffed no more. She flopped to a backless chair and squatted in a curious burlesque of Rodin's statue of "The Thinker." One heavy hand pinched her dewlap. Her hair was damp with steam and raining about her face. Her old waist was half buttoned, and no one would have regretted if it had been all buttoned. She was as plebeian as an ash-can and as full of old embers.

She was still immobilized when her husband came in. Now he gasped. His wife was loafing! sitting down! in the middle of the day! Thinking was loafing with her. He was supposed to do the family thinking. It was doubly necessary that she should work now, because he was on a strike. He had been to a meeting of other thinkers—ground and lofty thinkers who believed that they had discovered the true evil of the world and its remedy.

The evil was the possession of money by those who had accumulated it. The remedy was to take it away from them. Then the poor would be rich, which was right, and the rich would be poor, which was righter still.

It was well known that the only way to end the bad habit of work was to quit working. And the way to insure universal prosperity was to burn down the factories and warehouses, destroy all machinery and beggar the beasts who invented, invested, built, and hired and tried to get rich by getting riches.

This program would take some little time to perfect, and meanwhile Jake was willing that his wife should work. Indeed, a sharp fear almost unmanned him—what if she should fall sick and have to loaf in the horsepital? What if she should die? O Gord! Her little children would be left motherless—and fatherless, for he would, of course, be too busy saving the world to save his children. He would lose, too, the prestige enjoyed only by those who have their money in their wife's name. So he spoke to her with more than his wonted gentleness:

"Whatta hellsa matter wit choo?"

She felt the unusual concern in his voice, and smiled at him as best she could:

"I got a kind of a jolt. I seen this here pitcher, and I thought for a minute it was my sister."

"Your sister? How'd she get her pitcher in the paper? Who did she shoot?"

He snatched the sheet from her and saw the young woman in the young-manly garb.

Jake gloated over the picture: "Some looker! What is she, a queen in burlecue?"

Mrs. Nuddle held out the burned sliver of paper.

He roared. "London's ranging beaut? And you're what thinks she's your sister! The one that ran away? Was she a beaut like this?"

Mrs. Nuddle nodded. He whistled and said, with great tact:

"Cheese! but I have the rotten luck! Why didn't I see her first? Whyn't you tell me more about her? You never talk about her none. Why not?" No answer. "All I know is she went wrong and flew the coop."

Mrs. Nuddle flared at this. "Who said she went wrong?"

"You did!" Jake retorted with vigor. "Usedn't you to keep me awake praying for her—hollerin' at God to forgive her? Didn't you, or did you?" No answer. "And you think this is her!" The ridiculousness of the fantasy smote him. "Say, you must 'a' went plumb nutty! Bendin' over that tub must 'a' gave you a rush of brains to the head."

He laughed uproariously till she wanted to kill him. She tried to take back what she had said:

"Don't you set there tellin' me I ever told you nothin' mean about my pore little sister. She was as good a girl as ever lived, Mamise was."

"You're changin' your tune now, ain'tcha? Because you think she looks like a grand dam in pants! And where dya get that Mamise stuff? What was her honestogawd name? Maryer? You're tryin' to swell her up a little, huh?"

"No, I ain't. She was named Marie Louise after her gran'-maw, on'y as a baby she couldn't say it right. She said 'Mamise.' That's what she called her poor little self—Mamise. Seems like I can see her now, settin' on the floor like Sister. And where is she now? O Gawd! whatever become of her, runnin' off thataway—a little sixteen-year-ol' chile, runnin' off with a cheap thattical troupe, because her aunt smacked her.

"She never had no maw and no bringin' up, and she was so pirty. She had all the beauty of the fambly, folks all said."

"And that ain't no lie," said Jake, with characteristic gallantry. "There's nothin' but monopoly everywheres in the world. She got all the looks and I got you. I wonder who got her!"

Jake sighed as he studied the paper, ransacked it noisily for an article about her, but, finding none, looked at the date and growled:

"Aw, this paper's nearly a year old—May, 1916, it says."

This quelled his curiosity a little, and he turned to his dinner, flinging it into his jaws like a stoker. His wife went slip-slopping from stove to table, ministering to him.

Jake Nuddle did not look so dangerous as he was. He was like an old tomato-can that an anarchist has filled with dynamite and provided with a trigger for the destruction of whosoever disturbs it. Explosives are useful in place. But Jake was of the sort that blow up regardless of the occasion.

His dynamite was discontent. He hated everybody who was richer or better paid, better clothed, better spoken of than he was. Yet he had nothing in him of that constructive envy which is called emulation and leads to progress, to days of toil, nights of thought. His idea of equality was not to climb to the peak, but to drag the climbers down. Prating always of the sufferings of the poor, he did nothing to soothe them or remove them. His only contribution to the improvement of wages was to call a strike and get none at all. His contribution to the war against oppressive capital was to denounce all successful men as brutes and tyrants, lumping the benefactors with the malefactors.

Men of his type made up the blood-spillers of the French Revolution, and the packs of the earlier Jacquerie, the thugs who burned châteaux and shops, and butchered women as well as men, growling their ominous refrain:

"Noo sum zum cum eel zaw" (*"Nous sommes hommes comme ils sont"*).

The Jake Nuddles are hate personified. They formed secret armies of enemies now inside the nation and threatened her success in the war. The thing that prevented their triumph was that their blunders were greater than their malice, their folly more certain than their villainy. As soon as America entered the lists against Germany, the Jake Nuddles would begin doing their stupid best to prevent enlistment, to persuade desertion, to stop war-production, to wreck factories and trains, to ruin sawmills and burn crops. In the name of freedom they would betray its most earnest defenders, compel the battle-line to face both ways. They were more subtle than the snaky spies of Germany, and more venomous.

As he wolfed his food now, Jake studied the picture of Marie Louise. The gentlest influence her beauty exerted upon him was a beastly desire. He praised her grace because it tortured his wife. But even fiercer than his animal impulse was his rage of hatred at the look of cleanliness and comeliness, the environment of luxury only emphasized by her peasant disguise.

When he had mopped his plate with his bread, he took up the paper again and glared at it with hostile envy.

"Dammer and her arristocratic ways! Daughter of a Sir and a Lady, eh? Just wait till we get through with them Sirs and Ladies. We'll mow 'em down. You'll see. Robbin' us poor toilers that does all the work! We'll put an end to their peerages and their deer-parks. What Germany leaves of these birds we'll finish up. And then we'll take this rotten United States, the rottenest tyranny of all. Gawdammit! You just wait!"

His wife just waited till he had smashed the picture in the face, knocked the pretty lady's portrait to the floor and walked on it as he strode out to his revolution. Incidentally he trod on little Sister's hand, and she sent up a caterwaul. Her little brother howled in duet. Then father turned on them.

"Aw, shut up or I'll—"

He did not finish his sentence. He rarely finished anything

—except his meals. He left his children crying and his wife in a new distress; but then, revolutions cannot pause for women and children.

When he had gone, and Sister's tears had dried on her smutty face, Mrs. Nuddle picked up the smitten and trampled picture of England's reigning beauty and thought how lucky Miss W. was to be in England, blissful on Sir and Lady Somebody-or-other's estate.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN Mr. Verrinder left Marie Louise he took from her even the props of hostility. She had nothing to lean on now, nobody to fight with for life and reputation. She had only suspense and confusion. Agitated thoughts followed one another in waves across her soul—grief for her foster-father and mother, memory of their tendernesses, remorse for seeming to have deserted them in their last hours, remorse for having been the dupe of their schemes, and remorse for that remorse, grief at losing the lovable, troublesome children, creature distress at giving up the creature comforts of the luxurious home, the revulsion of her unfettered mind and her restless young body at the prospect of exchanging liberty and occupation for the half-death of an idle cell—a kind of coffin residence—fear of being executed as a spy, and fear of being released to drag herself through life with the ball and chain of guilt forever rolling and clanking at her feet.

Verrinder's mind was hardly more at rest when he left her and walked to his rooms. He carried the regret of a protector of England who had bungled his task and let the wards of his suspicion break loose. The fault was not his, but he would never escape the reproach. He had no taste for taking revenge on the young woman. It would not salve his pride to visit on her pretty head the thwarted punishments due Sir Joseph and his consort in guilt. Besides, in spite of his cynicism, he had been touched by Marie Louise's sincerities. She proved them by the very contradictions of her testimony, with its history of keen intelligence alternating with curious blindness. He knew how people get themselves all tangled up in conflicting duties, how they let evils slide along, putting off till to-morrow the severing of the cords and the stepping forth with freedom from obligation. He knew that the very best people, being those who are most sensitive to gratitude and

to other people's pains, are incessantly let in for complications that never involve selfish or self-righteous persons.

As an executive of the law, he knew how many laws there are unwritten and implied that make obedience to the law an experiment in caddishness and ingratitude. There were reasons enough then to believe that Marie Louise had meant no harm and had not understood the evil in which she was so useful an accomplice. Even if she were guilty and her bewilderment feigned, her punishment would be untimely at this moment when the Americans who abhorred and distrusted Germany had just about persuaded the majority of their countrymen that the world would be intolerable if Germany triumphed, and that the only hope of defeating her tyranny lay in joining hands with England, France, and Italy.

The enemies of England would be only too glad to make a martyr out of Miss Webling if she were disciplined by England. She would be advertised, as a counterweight to the hideous mistake the Germans made in immortalizing with their bullets the poor little nurse, "*die* Cavell."

Verrinder was not himself at all till he had bathed, shaved, and clothed his person in clean linen and given his inner man its tea and toast. Once this restoration was made, his tea deferred helped him to the conclusion that the one wise thing was to restore Marie Louise quietly to her own country. He went with freshened step and determined mind to a conference with the eminent men concerned. He made his own confession of failure and took more blame than he need have accepted. Then he told his plans for Marie Louise and made the council agree with him.

Early in the afternoon he called on Miss Webling and found the house a flurry of undertakers, curious relatives, and thwarted reporters. The relatives and the reporters he satisfied with a few well-chosen lies. Then he sent his name up to Marie Louise. The butler thrust the card-tray through the door as if he were tossing a bit of meat to some wild animal.

"I'll be down," said Marie Louise, and she primped herself like another Mary Queen of Scots receiving a call from the executioner. She was calmed by the hope that she would learn her fate, at least, and she cared little what it was, so long as it was not unknown.

Verrinder did not delay to spread his cards on the table.

"Miss Webling, I begin again with a question: If we should offer you freedom and silence, would you go back to America and tell no one of what has happened here?"

The mere hint was like flinging a door open and letting the sunlight into a dungeon. The very word "America" was itself a rush of fresh air. The long-forgotten love of country came back into her heart on a cry of hope.

"Oh, you don't mean that you might?"

"We might. In fact, we will, if you will promise—"

She could not wait for his formal conclusion. She broke in: "I'll promise anything—anything! Oh I don't want to be free just for the sake of escaping punishment! No, no. I just want a chance to—to expiate the evil I have done. I want to do some good to undo all the bad I've brought about. I won't try to shift any blame. I want to confess. It will take this awful load off my heart to tell people what a wicked fool I've been."

Verrinder checked her: "But that is just what you must not do. Unless you can assure us that you will carry this burden about with you and keep it secret at no matter what cost, then we shall have to proceed with the case—legally. We shall have to exhume Sir Joseph and Lady Webling, as it were, and drag the whole thing through the courts. We'd really rather not, but if you insist—"

"Oh, I'll promise. I'll keep the secret. Let them rest."

She was driven less by the thought of her own liberty than the terror of exposing the dead. The mere thought brought back pictures of hideous days when the grave was not refuge enough from vengeance, when bodies were dug up, gibbeted, haled by a chain along the unwashed cobblestones, quartered with a sword in the market-place and then flung back to the dark.

Verrinder may have feared that Marie Louise yielded under duress, and that when she was out of reach of the law she would forget, so he said

"Would you swear to keep this inviolate?"

"Yes!"

"Have you a Bible?"

She thought there must be one, and she searched for it among the bookshelves. But first she came across one in the German tongue. It fell open easily, as if it had been a

familiar companion of Sir Joseph's. She abhorred the sight of the words that youthful Sunday-school lessons had given an unearthly sanctity as she recognized them twisted into the German paraphrase and printed in the twisted German type. But she said:

"Will this do?"

Verrinder shook his head. "I don't know that an oath on a German Bible would really count. It might be considered a mere heap of paper."

Marie Louise put it aside and brushed its dust off her fingers. She found an English Bible after a further search. Ita pages had seen the light but seldom. It slipped from her hand and fell open. She knelt to pick it up with a tremor of fear.

She rose, and before she closed it glanced at the page before her. These words caught her eye:

For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me. Take the winecup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad because of the sword that I will send among them.

She showed them to Verrinder. He nodded solemnly, took the book from her hand, closed it, and held it before her. She put the slim tips of her young fingers near the talon of his old thumb and echoed in a timid, silvern voice the broken phrases he spoke in a tone of bronze:

"I solemnly swear—that so long as I live—I will tell no one—what I know—of the crimes and death—of Sir Joseph and Lady Webling—unless called upon—in a court of law. This oath is made—with no mental reservations—and is binding—under all circumstances whatsoever—so help me God!"

When she had whispered the last invocation he put the book away and gripped her hand in his.

"I must remind you that releasing you is highly illegal—and perhaps immoral. Our action might be overruled and the whole case opened. But I think you are safe, especially if you get to America—the sooner the better."

"Thank you!" she said.

He laughed, somewhat pathetically.

"Good luck!"

He did not tell her that England would still be watching over her, that her name and her history were already cabled to America, that she would be shadowed to the steamer, observed aboard the boat, and picked up at the dock by the first of a long series of detectives constituting a sort of serial guardian angel.

BOOK II

IN NEW YORK

"This is the life for me. I've been a heroine and a war-worker about as long as I can."

CHAPTER I

LEAVING England quickly was not easy in those days. Passenger-steamers were few, irregular, and secret. The passport regulations were exceedingly rigorous, and even Mr. Verrinder's influence could not speed the matter greatly.

There was the Webling estate to settle up, also. At Verrinder's suggestion Marie Louise put her affairs into the hands of counsel, and he arranged her surrender of all claims on the Webling estate. But he insisted that she should keep the twenty thousand pounds that had been given to her absolutely. He may have been influenced in this by his inability to see from what other funds he could collect his fee.

Eventually he placed her aboard a liner, and her bonds in the purser's safe; and eventually the liner stole out into the ocean, through such a gantlet of lurking demons as old superstitions peopled it with.

She had not told the children good-by, but had delivered them to the Oakbys and run away. The Oakbys had received her with a coldness that startled her. They used the expression, "Under the circumstances," with a freezing implication that made her wonder if the secret had already trickled through to them.

On the steamer there was nobody she knew. At the dock no friends greeted her. She did not notice that her arrival was noted by a certain Mr. Larrey, who had been detailed to watch her and saw with some pride how pretty she was. "It 'll be a pleasure to keep an eye on her," he told a luckless colleague who had a long-haired pacifist professor allotted to him. But Marie Louise's mystic squire had not counted on her stopping in New York for only a day and then setting forth on a long, hot, stupid train-ride of two days to the little town of her birth, Wakefield.

Larrey found it appalling. Marie Louise found it far smaller

and shabbier than she had imagined. Yet it had grown some, too, since her time.

At least, most of the people she had known had moved away to the cities or the cemeteries, and new people had taken their place. She had not known many of the better people. Her mother had been too humble to sew for them.

Coming from London and the country life of England, she found the town intolerably ugly. It held no associations for her. She had been unhappy there, and she said: "Poor me! No wonder I ran away." She justified her earlier self with a kind of mothering sympathy. She longed for some one to mother her present self.

But her sister was not to be found. The old house where they had lived was replaced by a factory that had made suspenders and now was turning out cartridge-belts. She found no one who knew her sister at all. She did not give her own name, for many reasons, and her face was not remembered. A few people recalled the family. The town marshal vaguely placed her father as a frequent boarder at the jail.

One sweet old lady, for whom Marie Louise's mother had done sewing, had a kind of notion that one of the sisters had run away and that the other sister had left town with somebody for somewhere sometime after. But that was all that the cupboard of her recollection disclosed.

Anatole France has a short story of Pilate in his old age meeting his predecessor as Proconsul in Jerusalem. During their senile gossip the elder asks if Pilate had known a certain beauty named Mary of Magdala. Pilate shakes his head. The other has heard that she took up with a street-preacher called Jesus from the town of Nazareth. Pilate ponders, shakes his head again, and confesses, "I don't remember him."

It was not strange, then, that Marie Louise's people, who had made almost no impression on the life of the town, should have lapsed from its memory. But it was discouraging. Marie Louise felt as much of an anachronism as old Rip Van Winkle, though she looked no more like him than an exquisite, fashionable young woman could look like a gray-bearded sot who has slept in his clothes for twenty years.

Her private detective, Larrey, homesick for New York,

was overjoyed when she went back, but she was disconsolate and utterly detached from life. The prodigal had come home, but the family had moved away.

She took a comfortable little nook in an apartment hotel and settled down to meditate. The shops interested her, and she browsed away among them for furniture and clothes and books.

Marie Louise had not been in her homeless home long when the President visited Congress and asked it to declare a state of war against Germany. She was exultant over the great step, but the wilful few who held Congress back from answering the summons revealed to her why the nation had been so slow in responding to the crisis. Even now, after so much insult and outrage, vast numbers of Americans denied that there was any cause for war.

But the patience of the majority had been worn thin. The opposition was swept away, and America declared herself in the arena—in spirit at least. Impatient souls who had prophesied how the millions would spring to arms overnight wondered at the failure to commit a miracle. The Germans, who had prepared for forty years, laughed at the new enemy and felt guaranteed by five impossibilities: that America should raise a real army, or equip it, or know how to train it, or be able to get it past the submarine barrier, or feed the few that might sneak through.

America's vast resources were unready, unwieldy, unknown. The first embarrassment was the panic of volunteers.

Marie Louise was only one of the hundred million who sprang madly in all directions and landed nowhere. She wanted to volunteer, too, but for what? What could she do? Where could she get it to do? In the chaos of her impatience she did nothing.

Supping alone at the Biltmore one night, she was seen, hailed, and seized by Polly Widdicombe. Marie Louise's detective knew who Polly was. He groaned to note that she was the first friend his client had found.

Polly, giggling adorably, embraced her and kissed her before everybody in the big Tudor Room. And Polly's husband greeted her with warmth of hand and voice.

Marie Louise almost wept, almost cried aloud with joy. The prodigal was home, had been welcomed with a kiss.

Evidently her secret had not crossed the ocean. She could take up life again. Some day the past would confront and denounce her, perhaps; but for the moment she was enfranchised anew of human society.

Polly said that she had read of Sir Joseph's death and his wife's, and what a shock it must have been to poor Marie Louise, but how well she bore up under it, and how perfectly darn beautiful she was, and what a shame that it was almost midnight! She and her hub. were going to Washington. Everybody was, of course. Why wasn't Marie Louise there? And Polly's husband was to be a major—think of it! He was going to be all dolled up in olive drab and things and— "Damn the clock, anyway; if we miss that train we can't get on another for days. And what's your address? Write it on the edge of that bill of fare and tear it off, and I'll write you the minute I get settled, for you must come to us and nowhere else and— Good-by, darling child, and— All right, Tom, I'm coming!"

And she was gone.

Marie Louise went back to her seclusion much happier and yet much lonelier. She had found a friend who had not heard of her disgrace. She had lost a friend who still rejoiced to see her.

But her faithful watchman was completely discouraged. When he turned in his report he threatened to turn in his resignation unless he were relieved of the futile task of recording Marie Louise's blameless and eventless life.

And then the agent's night was turned to day—at least his high noon was turned to higher. For a few days later Marie Louise was abruptly addressed by Nicky Easton.

She had been working in the big Red Cross shop on Fifth Avenue, rolling bandages and making dressings with a crowd of other white-fingered women. A cable had come that there was a sudden need for at least ten thousand bandages. These were not yet for American soldiers in France, though their turn would come, and their wholesale need. But as Marie Louise wrought she could imagine the shattered flesh, the crying nerves of some poor patriot whose gaping wound this linen pack would smother. And her own nerves cried out in vicarious crucifixion. At noon she left the factory for a little air and a bite of lunch.

Nicky Easton appeared out of her list of the buried. She gasped at sight of him.

"I thought you were dead."

He laughed: "If I am it, thees is my *Doppelgänger*." And he began to hum with a grisly smile Schubert's setting to Heine's poem of the man who met his own ghost and double, aping his love-sorrow outside the home of his dead sweetheart:

"Der Mond zeigt mir meine eig'ne Gestalt.
Du Doppelgänger, du bleicher Geselle!
Was äffst du nach mein Liebesleid,
Das mich gequält auf dieser Stelle
So manche Nacht in alter Zeit."

Marie Louise was terrified by the harrowing emotions the song always roused in her, but more by the dreadful sensation of walking that crowded Avenue with a man humming German at her side.

"Hush! Hush, in Heaven's name!" she pleaded.

He laughed Teutonically, and asked her to lunch with him.

"I have another engagement, and I am late," she said.

"Where are you living?"

She felt inspired to give him a false address. He insisted on walking with her to the Waldorf, where she said her engagement was.

"You don't ask me where I have been?"

"I was just going to. The last I heard you were in the London Tower or somewhere. However did you get out?"

"The same way like you ditt. I thought you should choin me therein, but you also told all you knew and some more yet, yes?"

She saw tnen that he had turned state s evidence. Perhaps he had betrayed Sir Joseph. Somehow she found it possible to loathe him extra. She lacked the strength to deny his odious insinuation about herself. He went on:

"Now I am in America. I could not dare go to Germany now. But here I try to gain back my place in *Deutschland*. These English think they use me for a stool-pitcheon. But they will find out, and when *Deutschland ist über alles—ach, Gott!* You shall help me. We do some work togedder. I come soon by your house. *Auf*— Goot-py."

He left her at the hotel door and lifted his hat. She went into the labyrinth and lost herself. When her heart had ceased fluttering and she grew calm from very fatigue of alarm she resolved to steal out of New York.

She spent an afternoon and an evening of indecision. Night brought counsel. Polly Widdicombe had offered her a haven, and in the country. It would be an ideal hiding-place. She set to work at midnight packing her trunk.

CHAPTER II

MARIE LOUISE tried all the next morning to telephone from New York to Washington, but it seemed that everybody on earth was making the same effort. It was a wire Babel.

Washington was suddenly America in the same way that London had long been England; and Paris France. The entire population was apparently trying to get into Washington in order to get out again. People wrote, telegraphed, radiographed, telephoned, and traveled thither by all the rail- and motor-roads. Washington was the narrow neck of the funnel leading to the war, and the sleepy old home of debate and administration was suddenly dumfounded to find itself treated to all the horrors of a boom-town—it was like San Francisco in '49.

Marie Louise, who had not yet recovered her American dialect, kept pleading with Long Distance:

"Oh, I say, cahn't you put me through to Washington? It's no end important, really! Rosslyn, seven three one two. I want to speak to Mrs. Widdicombe. I am Miss Webling. Thank you."

The obliging central asked her telephone number and promised to call her in a moment. Eternity is but a moment —to some centrals. Marie Louise, being finite and ephemeral, never heard from that central again. Later she took up the receiver and got another central, who had never heard her tale of woe and had to have it all over again. This central also asked her name and number and promised to report, then vanished into the interstellar limbo where busy centrals go.

Again and again Marie Louise waited and called, and told and retold her prayer till it turned to gibberish and she began to doubt her own name and to mix the telephone number hopelessly. Then she went into her hand-bag and pawed about in the little pocket edition of confusion till she found

the note that Polly had sent her at once from Washington with the address, Grinden Hall, Rosslyn, and the telephone number and the message.

So glad you're on this side of the water, dear. Do run over and see us. Perfect barn of a house, and lost in the country, but there's always room—especially for you, dear. You'll never get in at a hotel.

Marie Louise propped this against the telephone and tried again.

The seventh central dazed her with, "We can take nothing but gov'ment business till two P.M."

Marie Louise rose in despair, searched in her bag for her watch, gasped, put the watch and the note back in her bag, snapped it, and rose to go.

She decided to send Polly a telegram. She took out the note for the address and telephoned a telegram, saying that she would arrive at five o'clock. The telegraph-operator told her that the company could not guarantee delivery, as traffic over the wires was very heavy. Marie Louise sighed and rose, worn out with telephone-fag.

She told the maid to ask the hall-boy to get her a taxi, and hastily made ready to leave. Her trunks had gone to the station an hour ago, and they had been checked through from the house.

Her final pick-up glance about the room did not pick up the note she had propped on the telephone-table. She left it there and closed the door on another chapter of her life.

She rode to the station, and, after standing in line for a weary while, learned that not a seat was to be had in a parlor-car to-day, to-morrow, or any day for two weeks. Berths at night were still more unobtainable.

She decided that she might as well go in a day-coach. Scores of people had had the same idea before her. The day-coaches were filled. She sidled through the crowded aisles and found no seat. She invaded the chair-cars in desperation.

In one of these she saw a porter bestowing hand-luggage. She appealed to him. "You must have one chair left."

He was hardly polite in his answer. "No, ma'am, I ain't. I ain't a single chair."

"But I've got to sit somewhere," she said.

The porter did not comment on such a patent fallacy. He moved back to the front to repel boarders. Several men stared from the depths of their dentist's chairs, but made no proffer of their seats. They believed that woman's newfangled equality included the privilege of standing up.

One man, however, gave a start as of recognition, real or pretended. Marie Louise did not know him, and said so with her eyes. His smile of recognition changed to a smile of courtesy. He proffered her his seat with an old-fashioned gesture. She declined with a shake of the head and a coldly correct smile.

He insisted academically, as much as to say: "I can see that you are a gentlewoman. Please accept me as a gentleman and permit me to do my duty." There was a brief, silent tug-of-war between his unselfishness and hers. He won. Before she realized it, she had dropped wearily into his place.

"But where will you sit?" she said.

"Oh, I'll get along."

He smiled and moved off, lugging his suit-case. He had the air of one who would get along. He had shown himself masterful in two combats, and compelled her to take the chair he had doubtless engaged with futile providence days before.

"Rahthah a decentish chap, with a will of his own," she thought.

The train started, left the station twilight, plunged into the tunnel of gloom and made the dip under the Hudson River. People felt their ears buzz and smother. Wise ones swallowed hard. The train came back to the surface and the sunlight, and ran across New Jersey.

Marie Louise decided to take her luncheon early, to make sure of it. Nearly everybody else had decided to do the same thing. At this time all the people in America seemed to be thinking *en masse*. When she reached the dining-car every seat was taken and there was a long bread-line in the narrow corridor.

The wilful man was at the head. He fished for her eye, caught it, and motioned to her to take his place. She shook her head. But it seemed to do no good to shake heads at him; he came down the corridor and lifted his hat. His voice and words were pleading, but his tone was imperative.

"Please take my place."

She shook her head, but he still held his hand out, pointing. She was angry at being bossed even for her own benefit. Worse yet, by the time she got to the head of the line the second man had moved up to first. He stared at her as if he wondered what she was doing there. She fell back, doubly vexed, but That Man advanced and gave the interloper a look like a policeman's shove. The fellow backed up on the next man's toes. Then the cavalier smiled Miss Webling to her place and went back to the foot of the class without waiting for her furious thanks.

She wanted to stamp her foot. She had always hated to be cowed or compelled to take chairs or money. People who had tried to move her soul or lend her their experience or their advantages had always aroused resentment.

Before long she had a seat. The man opposite her was just thumbing his last morsel of pie. She supposed that when he left That Man would take the chair and order her luncheon for her. But it was not so to be. She passed him still well down the line. He had probably given his place to other women in succession. She did not like that. It seemed a trifle unfaithful or promiscuous or something. The rescuer owes the rescuee a certain fidelity. He did not look at her. He did not claim even a glance of gratitude.

It was so American a gallantry that she resented it. If he had seemed to ask for the alms of a smile, she would have insulted him. Yet it was not altogether satisfactory to be denied the privilege. She fumed. Everything was wrong. She sat in her cuckoo's nest and glared at the reeling landscape.

Suddenly she began pawing through that private chaos, looking for Polly Widdicombe's letter. She could not find it. She found the checks for her trunks, a handkerchief, a pair of gloves, and various other things, but not the letter. This gave her a new fright.

She remembered now that she had left it on the telephone-table. She could see it plainly as her remembered glance took its last survey of the room. The brain has a way of developing occasional photographs very slowly. Something strikes our eyes, and we do not really see it till long after. We hear words and say, "How's that?" or, "I beg your pardon!" and hear them again before they can be repeated.

This belated feat of memory encouraged Miss Webling to

hope that she could remember a little farther back to the contents of the letter and the telephone number written there. But her memory would not respond. The effort to cudgel it seemed to confuse it. She kept on forgetting more and more completely.

All she could remember was what Polly Widdicombe had said about there being no chance to get into a hotel—"an hôtel," Marie Louise still thought it.

It grew more and more evident that the train would be hours late. People began to worry audibly about the hotels that would probably refuse them admission. At length they began to stroll toward the dining-car for an early dinner.

Marie Louise, to make sure of the meal and for lack of other employment, went along. There was no queue in the corridor now. She did not have to take That Man's place. She found one at a little empty table. But by and by he appeared, and, though there were other vacant seats, he sat down opposite her.

She could hardly order the conductor to eject him In fact, seeing that she owed him for her seat— It suddenly smote her that he must have paid for it. She owed him money! This was unendurable!

He made no attempt to speak to her, but at length she found courage to speak to him.

"I beg your pardon—"

He looked up and about for the salt or something to pass, but she went on:

"May I ask you how much you paid for the seat you gave me?"

He laughed outright at this unexpected demand:

"Why, I don't remember, I'm sure."

"Oh, but you must, and you must let me repay it. It just occurred to me that I had cheated you out of your chair, and your money, too."

"That's mighty kind of you," he said.

He laughed again, but rather tenderly, and she was grateful to him for having the tact not to be flamboyant about it and not insisting on forgetting it.

"I'll remember just how much it was in a minute, and if you will feel easier about it, I'll ask you for it."

"I could hardly rob a perfect stranger," she began.

He broke in: "They say nobody is perfect, and I'm not a perfect stranger. I've met you before, Miss Webling."

"Not rilly! Wherever was it? I'm so stupid not to remember—even your name."

He rather liked her for not bluffing it through. He could understand her haziness the better from the fact that when he first saw her in the chair-car and leaped to his feet it was because he had identified her once more with the long-lost, long-sought beauty of years long gone—the girl he had seen in the cheap vaudeville theater. This slip of memory had uncovered another memory. He had corrected the palimpsest and recalled her as the Miss Webling whom he had met in London. She had given him the same start then as now, and, as he recalled it, she had snubbed him rather vigorously. So he had kept his distance. But the proffer of the money for the chair-car chair broke the ice a little. He said at last:

"My name is Ross Davidge. I met you at your father's house in London."

This seemed to agitate her peculiarly. She trembled and gasped:

"You don't mean it. I— Oh yes, of course I remember—"

"Please don't lie about it," he pleaded, bluntly, "for of course you don't."

She laughed, but very nervously.

"Well, we did give very large dinners."

"It was a very large one the night I was there. I was a mile down the street from you, and I said nothing immortal. I was only a business acquaintance of Sir Joseph's, anyway. It was about ships, of course."

He saw that her mind was far away and under strange excitation. But she murmured, distantly:

"Oh, so you are—interested in ships?"

"I make 'em for a living."

"Rilly! How interesting!"

This constraint was irksome. He ventured:

"How is the old boy? Sir Joseph, I mean. He's well, I hope."

Her eyes widened. "Didn't you know? Didn't you read in the papers—about their death together?"

"Theirs? His wife and he died together?"

"Yes."

"In a submarine attack?"

"No, at home. It was in all the papers—about their dying on the same night, from—from ptomaine poisoning."

"No!"

He put a vast amount of shock and regret in the mumbled word. He explained: "I must have been out in the forest or in the mines at the time. Forgive me for opening the old wound. How long ago was it? I see you're out of mourning."

"Sir Joseph abominated black; and besides, few people wear mourning in England during the war."

"That's so. Poor old England! You poor Englishwomen—mothers and daughters! My God! what you've gone through! And such pluck!"

Before he realized what he was doing his hand went across and touched hers, and he clenched it for just a moment of fierce sympathy. She did not resent the message. Then he muttered:

"I know what it means. I lost my father and mother—not at once, of course—years apart. But to lose them both in one night!"

She made a sharp attempt at self-control:

"Please! I beg you—please don't speak of it."

He was so sorry that he said nothing more. Marie Louise was doubly fascinating to him because she was in sorrow and afraid of something or somebody. Besides, she was inaccessible, and Ross Davidge always felt a challenge from the impossible and the inaccessible.

She called for her check and paid it, and tipped the waiter and rose. She smiled wretchedly at him as he rose with her. She left the dining-car, and he sat down and cursed himself for a brute and a blunderer.

He kept in the offing, so that if she wanted him she could call him, but he thought it the politer politeness not to italicize his chivalry. He was so distressed that he forgot that she had forgotten to pay him for the chair.

It was good and dark when the train pulled into Washington at last. The dark gave Marie Louise another reason for dismay. The appearance of a man who had dined at Sir Joseph's, and the necessity for telling him the lie about that death, had brought on a crisis of nerves. She was afraid of the dark,

but more afraid of the man who might ask still more questions. She avoided him purposely when she left the train.

A porter took her hand-baggage and led her to the taxi-stand. Polly Widdicombe's car was not waiting. Marie Louise went to the front of the building to see if she might be there. She was appalled at the thought of Polly's not meeting her. She needed her blessed giggle as never before.

It was a very majestic station. Marie Louise had heard people say that it was much too majestic for a railroad station. As if America did not owe more to the iron god of the rails than to any of her other deities!

Before her was the Capitol, lighted from below, its dome floating cloudily above the white parapets as if mystically sustained. The superb beauty of it clutched her throat. She wanted to do something for it and all the holy ideals it symbolized.

Evidently Polly was not coming. The telegram had probably never reached her. The porter asked her, "Was you thinkin' of a taxi?" and she said, "Yes," only to realize that she had no address to give the driver.

BOOK III

IN WASHINGTON

"'It's beautiful overhead if you're going that way,'" Davidge quoted. He set out briskly, but Marie Louise hung back. "Aren't you afraid to push on when you can't see where you're going?" she demanded.

CHAPTER I

SHE went through her hand-bag again, while the porter computed how many tips he was missing and the cab-starter looked insufferable things about womankind.

She asked if any of them knew where Grinden Hall might be, but they shook their heads. She had a sudden happy idea. She would ask the telephone Information for the number. She hurried to a booth, followed by the despondent porter. She asked for Information and got her, but that was all.

"Please give me the numba of Mrs. Widdicombe's, in Rosslyn."

A Washington dialect eventually told her that the number was a private wire and could not be given.

Marie Louise implored a special dispensation, but it was against the rules.

She asked for the supervisor—who was equally sorry and adamant. Marie Louise left the booth in utter defeat. There was nothing to do but go to a hotel till the morrow.

She recalled the stories of the hopelessness of getting a room. Yet she had no choice but to make the try. She had got a seat on the train where there were none. Perhaps she could trust her luck to provide her with a lodging, too.

"We'll go back to the taxi-stand," she told the porter.

He did not conceal his joy at being rid of her.

She tried the Shoreham first, and when the taxicab deposited her under the umbrellas of the big trees and she climbed the homelike steps to a lobby with the air of a living-room she felt welcome and secure. Brilliant clusters were drifting to dinner, and the men were more picturesque than the women, for many of them were in uniform. Officers of the army and navy of the United States and of Great Britain and of France gave the throng the look of a costume-party.

There was a less interesting crowd at the desk, and now nobody offered her his place at the head of the line. It would have done no good, for the room-clerk was shaking his head to all the suppliants. Marie Louise saw women turned away, married couples, men alone. But new-comers pressed forward and kept trying to convince the deskman that he had rooms somewhere, rooms that he had forgotten, or was saving for people who would never arrive.

He stood there shaking his head like a toy in a window. People tried to get past him in all the ways people try to get through life, in the ways that Saint Peter must grow very tired of at the gate of heaven—bluff, whine, bribery, intimidation, flirtation.

Some demanded their rights with full confidence and would not take no for answer. Some pleaded with hopelessness in advance; they were used to rebuffs. They appealed to his pity. Some tried corruption; they whispered that they would "make it all right," or they managed a sly display of money—one a one-dollar bill with the "1" folded in, another a fifty-dollar bill with the "50" well to the fore. Some grew ugly and implied favoritism; they were the born strikers and anarchists. Even though they looked rich, they had that habit of finding oppression and conspiracy everywhere. A few women appealed to his philanthropy, and a few others tried to play the siren. But his head oscillated from side to side, and nobody could swing it up and down.

Marie Louise watched the procession anxiously. There seemed to be no end to it. The people who had come here first had been turned away into outer darkness long ago and had gone to other hotels. The present wretches were those who had gone to the other hotels first and made this their second, third, or sixth choice.

Marie Louise did not go to the desk. She could take a hint at second hand. She would have been glad of a place to sit down, but all the divans were filled with gossipers very much at home and somewhat contemptuous of the vulgar herd trying to break into their select and long-established circle. She heard a man saying, with amiable anger: "Ah'm mahty sah'y Ah can't put you up at ouah haouse, but we've got 'em hangin' on the hat-rack

in the hall. You infunnal patriots have simply ruined this little old taown."

She heard a pleasant laugh. "Don't worry. I'll get along somehow."

She glanced aside and saw That Man again. She had forgotten his name again; yet she felt curiously less lonely, not nearly so hopeless. The other man said:

"Say, Davidge, are you daown heah looking for one of these dollah-a-yeah jobs? Can you earn it?"

"I'm not looking for a job. I'm looking for a bed."

"Not a chance. The government's taken ovah half the hotels for office-buildings."

"I'll go to a Turkish bath, then."

"Good Lawd! man, I hud a man propose that, and the hotel clerk said he had telephoned the Tukkish bath, and a man theah said: 'For God's sake don't send anybody else heah! We've got five hundred cots full naow.'"

"There's Baltimore."

"Baltimer's full up. So's Alexandra. Go on back home and write a letta."

"I'll try a few more hotels first."

"No use—not an openin'."

"Well, I've usually found that the best place to look for things is where people say they don't grow."

Marie Louise thought that this was most excellent advice. She decided to follow it and keep on trying.

As she was about to move toward the door the elevator, like a great cornucopia, spilled a bevy of men and women into the lobby. Leading them all came a woman of charm, of distinction, of self-possession. She was smiling over one handsome shoulder at a British officer.

The forlorn Marie Louise saw her, and her eyes rejoiced; her face was kindled with haven-beacons. She pressed forward with her hand out, and though she only murmured the words, a cry of relief thrilled them.

"Lady Clifton-Wyatt! What luck to find you!"

Lady Clifton-Wyatt turned with a smile of welcome in advance. Her hand went forward. Her smile ended suddenly. Blank amazement passed into contemptuous wrath. Her hand went back. With the disgust of a sick eagle in a zoo, she drew a film over her eyes.

The smile on Marie Louise's face also hung unsupported for a moment. It faded, then rallied. She spoke with patience, underlining the words with an affectionate reproof:

"My dear Lady Clifton-Wyatt, I am Miss Webling—Marie Louise. Don't you know me?"

Lady Clifton-Wyatt answered: "I did. But I don't!"

Then she turned and moved toward the dining-room door.

The head waiter bowed with deference and command and beckoned Lady Clifton-Wyatt. She obeyed him with meek hauteur.

CHAPTER II

AS she came out of the first hotel of her selection and rejection Marie Louise asked the car-starter the name of another. He mentioned the New Willard.

It was not far, and she was there before she had time to recover from the staggering effect of Lady Clifton-Wyatt's bludgeon-like snub. As timidly as the waif and estray that she was, she ventured into the crowded, gorgeous lobby with its lofty and ornate ceiling on its big columns. At one side a long corridor ran brokenly up a steep hill. It was populous with loungers who had just finished their dinners or were waiting for a chance to get into the dining-rooms. Orchestra music was lilting down the aisle.

When Marie Louise had threaded the crowd and reached the desk a very polite and eager clerk asked her if she had a reservation. He seemed to be as regretful as she when she said no. He sighed, "We've turned away a hundred people in the last two hours."

She accepted her dismissal dumbly, then paused to ask, "I say, do you by any chance know where Grinden Hall is?"

He shook his head and turned to another clerk to ask, "Do you know of a hotel here named Grinden Hall?"

The other shook his head, too. There was a vast amount of head-shaking going on everywhere in Washington. He added, "I'm new here." Nearly everybody seemed to be new here. It seemed as if the entire populace had moved into a ready-made town.

Marie Louise had barely the strength to explain, "Grinden Hall is not an hotel; it is a home, in Rosslyn, wherever that is."

"Oh, Rosslyn—that's across the river in Virginia."

"Do you know, by any chance, Major Thomas Widdicombe?"

He shook his head. Major Widdicombe was a big man, but the town was fairly swarming with men bigger than he.

There were shoals of magnates, but giants in their own communities were petty nuisances here pleading with room-clerks for cots and with head waiters for bread. The lobby was a thicket of prominent men set about like trees. Several of them had the Congressional look. Later history would record them as the historic statesmen of titanic debates, men by whose eloquence and leadership and committee-room toil the Republic would be revolutionized in nearly every detail, and billions made to flow like water.

As Marie Louise collected her porter and her hand-luggage for her next exit she saw Ross Davidge just coming in. She stepped behind a large politician or something. She forgot that she owed Davidge money, and she felt a rather pleasurable agitation in this game of hide-and-seek, but something made her shy of Davidge. For one thing, it was ludicrous to be caught being turned out of a second hotel.

The politician walked away, and Davidge would have seen Marie Louise if he had not stopped short and turned a cold shoulder on her, just as the distant orchestra, which had been crooning one of Jerome Kern's most insidiously ingratiating melodies, began to blare with all its might the sonorities of "The Star-spangled Banner."

Miss Webling saw the people in the alley getting to their feet slowly, awkwardly. A number of army and navy officers faced the music and stood rigid at attention. The civilians in the lobby who were already standing began to pull their hats off sheepishly like embarrassed peasants. People were still as self-conscious as if the song had just been written. They would soon learn to feel the tremendous importance of that eternal query, the only national anthem, perhaps, that ever began with a question and ended with a prayer. Americans would soon learn to salute it with eagerness and to deal ferociously with men—and women, too—who were slow to rise.

Marie Louise watched Davidge curiously. He was manifestly on fire with patriotism, but he was ashamed to show it, ashamed to stand erect and click his heels. He fumbled his hat and slouched, and looked as if he had been caught in some guilt. He was indeed guilty of a childish fervor. He wanted to shout, he wanted to weep, he wanted to fight somebody; but he did not know how to express himself with-

out striking an attitude, and he was incapable of being a *poseur*—except as an American posily affects poselessness.

When the anthem ended, people sank into their chairs with sighs of relief; the officers sharply relaxed; the civilians straightened up and felt at home again. Ross Davidge marched to the desk, not noticing Marie Louise, who motioned to her porter to come along with her luggage and went to hunt shelter at the Raleigh Hotel. She kept her taxi now and left her hand-baggage in it while she received the inevitable rebuff. From there she traveled to hotel after hotel, marching in with the dismal assurance that she would march right out again.

The taxi-driver was willing to take her to hotels as long as they and her money lasted. Her strength and her patience gave out first. At the Lafayette she advanced wearily, disconsolately to the desk. She saw Ross Davidge stretched out in a big chair. He did not see her. His hat was pulled over his eyes, and he had the air of angry failure. If he despaired, what chance had she?

She received the usual regrets from the clerk. As she left the desk the floor began to wabble. She hurried to an inviting divan and dropped down, beaten and distraught. She heard some one approach, and her downcast eyes saw a pair of feet move up and halt before her.

Since Lady Clifton-Wyatt's searing glance and words Marie Louise had felt branded visibly, and unworthy of human kindness and shelter. She was piteously grateful to this man for his condescension in saying:

"You'll have to excuse me for bothering you again. But I'm afraid you're in worse trouble than I am. Nobody seems to be willing to take you in."

He meant this as a light jocularity, but it gave her a moment's serious fear that he had overheard Lady Clifton-Wyatt's slashing remark. But he went on:

"Won't you allow me to try to find you a place? Don't you know anybody here?"

"I know numbers of people, but I don't know where any of them are."

She told him of her efforts to get to Rosslyn by telephone, by telegraph, by train or taxicab. Little tears added a sparkle to laughter, but threatened rain. She ended with, "And

now that I've unloaded my riddles on you, aren't you sorry you spoke?"

"Not yet," he said, with a subtle compliment pleasantly implying that she was perilous. Everybody likes to be thought perilous. He went on: "I don't know Rosslyn, but it can't be much of a place for size. If you have a friend there, we'll find her if we have to go to every house in Rosslyn."

"But it's getting rather late, isn't it, to be knocking at all the doors all by myself?"

She had not meant to hint, and it was a mere coincidence that he thought to say:

"Couldn't I go along?"

"Thank you, but it's out in the country rather far, I'm afraid."

"Then I must go along.

"I couldn't think of troubling you."

The end of it was that he had his way, or she hers, or both theirs. He made no nonsense of adventure or escapade about it, and she was too well used to traveling alone to feel ashamed or alarmed. He led her to the taxi, told the driver that Grinden Hall was their objective and must be found. Then he climbed in with her, and they rode in a dark broken with the fitful lightnings of street-lamps and motors.

The taxi glided out M Street. The little shops of Georgetown went sidelong by. The cab turned abruptly to the left and clattered across the old aqueduct bridge. On a broad reach of the Potomac the new-risen moon spread a vast sheet of tin-foil of a crinkled sheen. This was all that was beautiful about the sordid neighborhood, but it was very beautiful, and tender to a strange degree.

Once across, the driver stopped and leaned round to call in at the door:

"This is Rosslyn. Where do yew-all want to go next?"

"Grinden Hall. Ask somebody."

"Ask who? They ain't a soul tew be saw."

They waited in the dark awhile; then Davidge got out and, seeing a street-car coming down through the hills like a dragon in fiery scales, he stopped it to ask the motorman of Grinden Hall. He knew nothing, but a sleepy passenger said that he reckoned that that was the fancy name of Mr. Sawtell's place, and he shouted the directions:

"Yew go raht along this road ovah the caw tracks, and unda a bridge and keep a-goin' up a ridge and ova till yew come to a shawp tu'n to the raht. Big whaht mansion, ain't it?"

"I don't know," said Davidge. "I never saw it."

"Well, I reckon that's the place. Only 'Hall' I knaow about up heah."

The motorman kicked his bell and started off.

"Nothing like trying," said Davidge, and clambered in. The taxicab went veering and yawing over an unusually Virginian bad road. After a little they entered a forest. The driver threw on his search-light, and it tore from the darkness pictures of forest eerily green in the glare—old trees slanting out, deep channels blackening into mysterious glades. The car swung sharply to the right and growled up a hill, curving and swirling and threatening to capsize at every moment. The sense of being lost was irresistible.

Marie Louise fell to pondering; suddenly she grew afraid to find Grinden Hall. She knew that Polly knew Lady Clifton-Wyatt. They might have met since Polly wrote that letter. Lady Clifton-Wyatt had perhaps—had doubtless—told Polly all about Marie Louise. Polly would probably refuse her shelter. She knew Polly: there was no middle ground between her likes and dislikes; she doted or she hated. She was capable of smothering her friends with affection and of making them ancient enemies in an instant. For her enemies she had no use or tolerance. She let them know her wrath.

The car stopped. The driver got down and went forward to a narrow lane opening from the narrow road. There was a sign-board there. He read it by the light of the moon and a few matches. He came back and said:

"Here she is. Grinden Hall is what she says on that theah sign-bode."

Marie Louise was in a flutter. "What time is it?" she asked.

Davidge held his watch up and lighted a match.

"A little after one."

"It's awfully late," she said.

The car was turning at right angles now, and following a narrow track curling through a lawn studded with shrubbery. There was a moment's view of all Washington beyond the

valley of the moon-illumined river. Its lights gleamed in a patient vigilance. It had the look of the holy city that it is. The Capitol was like a mosque in Mecca, the Mecca of the faithful who believe in freedom and equality. The Washington Monument, picked out from the dark by a search-light, was a lofty steeple in a dream-world.

Davidge caught a quick breath of piety and reverence. Marie Louise was too frightened by her own destiny to think of the world's anxieties.

The car raced round the circular road. Her eyes were snatched from the drowsy town, small with distance, to the imminent majesty of a great Colonial portico with columns tall and stately and white, a temple of Parthenonian dignity in the radiance of the priestly moon. There was not a light in any window, no sign of life.

The car stopped. But—Marie Louise simply dared not face Polly and risk a scene in the presence of Davidge. She tapped on the glass and motioned the driver to go on. He could not believe her gestures. She leaned out and whispered:

"Go on—go on! I'll not stop!"

Davidge was puzzled, but he said nothing; and Marie Louise made no explanation till they were outside again, and then she said:

"Do you think I'm insane?"

"This is not my party," he said.

She tried to explain: "There wasn't a light to be seen. They couldn't have got my telegram. They weren't expecting me. They may not have been at home. I hadn't the courage to stop and wake the house."

That was not her real reason, but Davidge asked for no other. If he noted that she was strangely excited over a trifle like getting a few servants and a hostess out of bed, he made no comment.

When she pleaded, "Do you mind if I go back to Washington with you?" he chuckled: "It's certainly better than going alone. But what will you do when you get there?"

"I'll go to the railroad station and sit up," Marie Louise announced. "I'm no end sorry to have been such a nuisance."

"Nuisance!" he protested, and left his intonation to convey all the compliments he dared not utter.

The cab dived into another woods and ran clattering down

a roving hill road. Up the opposite steep it went with a weary gait. It crawled to the top with turtle-like labor. Davidge knew the symptoms, and he frowned in the shadow, yet smiled a little.

The car went banging down, held by a squealing brake. The light grew faint, and in the glimmer there was a close shave at the edge of a hazardous bridge over a deep, deep ravine. The cab rolled forward on the rough planks under its impetus, but it picked up no speed. Half-way across, it stopped.

"Whatever is the matter?" Marie Louise exclaimed.

Davidge leaned out and called to the driver, "What's the matter now?" though he knew full well.

"Gas is gone, I reckon," the fellow snarled, as he got down. After a moment's examination he confirmed his diagnosis. "Yep, gas is all gone. I been on the go too long on this one call."

"In Heaven's name, where can you get some more gasolene?" said Marie Louise.

"Nearest garodge is at Rosslyn, I reckon, lady."

"How far is that?"

"I'd hate to say, lady. Three, fo' mahls, most lahkly, and prob'ly closed naow."

"Go wake it up at once."

"No thanky, lady. I got mahty po' feet for them hills."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Ain't nothin' tew dew but wait fo' somebody to come along."

"When will that be?"

"Along todes mawnin' they ought to be somebody along, milkman or somethin'."

"Cheerful!" said Marie Louise.

"Batt'ries kind o' sick, tew, looks lahk. I was engaged by the houah, remember," the driver reminded them as he clambered back to his place, put his feet up on the dashboard and let his head roll into a position of ease.

The dimming lights waned and did not wax. By and by they went where lights go when they go out. There was no light now except the moonset, shimmering mistily across the tree-tops of the rotunda of the forest, just enough to emphasize the black of the well they were in.

CHAPTER III

HOW would she take it?

That was what interested Davidge most. What was she really like? And what would she do with this intractable situation? What would the situation do with her? For situations make people as well as people situations.

Now was the time for an acquaintance of souls. An almost absolute dark erased them from each other's sight. Their eyes were as useless as the useless eyes of fish in subterrene caverns. Miss Webling could have told Davidge the color of his eyes, of course, being a woman. But being a man, he could not remember the color of hers, because he had noted nothing about her eyes except that they were very eye-ish.

He would have blundered ridiculously in describing her appearance. His information of her character was all to gain. He had seen her wandering about Washington homeless among the crowds and turned from every door. She had borne the ordeal as well as could be asked. She had accepted his proffer of protection with neither terror nor assurance.

He supposed that in a similar plight the old-fashioned woman—or at least the ubiquitous woman of the special eternal type that fictionists call "old-fashioned"—would have been either a bleating, tremulous gazelle or a brazen siren. But Miss Webling behaved like neither of these. She took his gallantry with a matter-of-fact reasonableness, much as a man would accept the offer of another man's companionship on a tiresome journey. She gave none of those multitudinous little signals by which a woman indicates that she is either afraid that a man will try to hug her or afraid that he will not. She was apparently planning neither to flirt nor to faint.

Davidge asked in a matter-of-fact tone: "Do you think you could walk to town? The driver says it's only three-fo' miles."

She sighed: "My feet would never make it. And I have on high-heeled boots."

His "Too bad!" conveyed more sympathy than she expected. He had another suggestion.

"You could probably get back to the home of Mrs. Widdicombe. That isn't so far away."

She answered, bluntly, "I shouldn't think of it!"

He made another proposal without much enthusiasm.

"Then I'd better walk in to Washington and get a cab and come back for you."

She was even blunter about this: "I shouldn't dream of that. You're a wreck, too."

He lied pluckily, "Oh, I shouldn't mind."

"Well, I should! And I don't fancy the thought of staying here alone with that driver."

He smiled in the dark at the double-edged compliment of implying that she was safer with him than with the driver. But she did not hear his smile.

She apologized, meekly: "I've got you into an awful mess, haven't I? I usually do make a mess of everything I undertake. You'd better beware of me after this."

His "I'll risk it" was a whole cyclopedia of condensed gallantry.

They sat inept for a time, thinking aimlessly, seeing nothing, hearing only the bated breath of the night wind groping stealthily through the tree-tops, and from far beneath, the still, small voice of a brook feeling its way down its unlighted stairs.

At last her voice murmured, "Are you quite too horribly uncomfortable for words?"

His voice was a deep-toned bell somehow articulate: "I couldn't be more comfortable except for one thing. I'm all out of cigars."

"Oh!" He had a vague sense of her mental struggle before she spoke again, timidly:

"I fancy you don't smoke cigarettes?"

"When I can't get cigars; any tobacco is better than none."

Another blank of troubled silence, then, "I wonder if you'd say that of mine."

Her voice was both defiant and trepidate. He laughed. "I'll guarantee to."

A few years before he would have accepted a woman's confession that she smoked cigarettes as a confession of complete abandonment to all the other vices. A few years farther back, indeed, and he would have said that any man who smoked cigarettes was worthless. Since then he had seen so many burly heroes and so many unimpeachable ladies smoke them that he had almost forgotten his old prejudice. In some of the United States it was then against the law for men (not to say women and children) to sell or give away or even to possess cigarettes. After the war crusades would start against all forms of tobacco, and at least one clergyman would call every man who smoked cigarettes a "drug-addict." It is impossible for anybody to be moral enough not to be immoral to somebody.

But intolerances go out of style as suddenly as new creeds come in. He knew soldiers who held a lighted stub in one hand while they rolled a cigarette with the other. He knew Red Cross saints who could puff a forbidden cigarette like a prayer. He wondered how he or any one had ever made such a fierce taboo of a wisp of aromatic leaves kindled in a tiny parcel. Such strange things people choose for their tests of virtue—tests that have nothing whatever to do with the case, whether savage or civilized folk invent them.

He heard Miss Webling fumbling in a hand-bag. He heard the click of her rings against metal. He heard the little noise of the portals of a cigarette-case opening. His hands and hers stumbled together, and his fingers selected a little cylinder from the row.

He produced a match and held the flame before her. He filled his eyes with her vivid features as the glow detached her from the dark. Of her eyes he saw only the big lids, but he noted her lips, pursed a trifle with the kissing muscles, and he sighed as she blew a smoke about her like a goddess creating a cloud of vanishment. He lighted his own cigarette and threw the match away. They returned to a perfect gloom mitigated by the slight increase and decrease in the vividness of their tobacco-tips as they puffed.

She was the first to speak:

"I have a whole box of fags in my hand-bag. I usually have a good supply. When you want another— Does it horrify you to see a woman smoke?"

He was very superior to his old bigotry. "Quite the contrary!"

This was hardly honest enough, so he said:

"It did once, though. I remember how startled I was years ago when I was in England and I saw ladies smoking in hotel corridors; and on the steamer coming back, there was a countess or something who sat in the balcony and puffed away. Of course, at the big dinners in London they smoked, too. They did at Sir Joseph's, I remember."

He did not see her wince at this name.

"There were some odd fish surrounding old Sir Joseph. Some of them I couldn't quite make out. He was just a little hard to get at, himself. I got very huffy at the old boy once or twice, I'm sorry to say. It was about ships. I'm a crank on ships. Everybody has at least one mania. That's mine—ships. Sir Joseph and I quarreled about them. He wanted to buy all I could make, but he was in no hurry to have 'em finished. I told him he talked more like a German trying to stop production than like a Britisher trying to speed it up. That made him huffy. I'm sorry I did him such an injustice. When you insult a man, and he dies—What a terrible repartee dying is! He had offered me a big price, too, but it's not money I want to make; it's ships. And I want to see 'em at work. Did you ever see a ship launched?"

"No, I never did."

"There's nothing prettier. Come over to my shipyard and I'll show you. We're going to put one over before long. I'll let you christen her."

"That would be wonderful."

"It's better than that. The civilized world is starting out on the most poetic job it ever undertook."

"Indeed?"

"Yep. The German sharks are gradually dragging all our shipping under water. The inventors don't seem able to devise any cure for the submarines except to find 'em and fight 'em. They're hard to find, and they won't fight. But they keep popping up and stabbing our pretty ships to death. And now the great game is on, the greatest game that civilized men ever fought with hell."

"What's that?"

"We're going to try to build ships faster than the Hun can sink 'em. Isn't that a glorious job for you? Was there ever a—well, a nobler idea? We can't kill the beast; so we're going to choke him to death with food." He laughed to hide his embarrassing exaltation.

She was not afraid of it: "It is rather a stupendous inspiration, isn't it?"

"Who was it said he'd rather have written Gray's 'Elegy' than taken Quebec? I'd rather have thought up this thought than written the Iliad. Nobody knows who invented the idea. He's gone to oblivion already, but he has done more for the salvation of freedom than all the poets of time."

This shocked her, yet thrilled her with its loftiness. She thrilled to him suddenly, too. She saw that she was within the aura of a fiery spirit—a business man aflame. And she saw in a white light that the builders of things, even of perishable things, are as great as the weavers of immortal words—not so well remembered, of course, for posterity has only the words. Poets and highbrows scorn them, but living women who can see the living men are not so foolish. They are apt to prefer the maker to the writer. They reward the poet with a smile and a compliment, but give their lives to the manufacturers, the machinists, the merchants. Then the neglected poets and their toadies the critics grow sarcastic about this and think that they have condemned women for materialism when they are themselves blind to its grandeur. They ignore the divinity that attends the mining and smelting and welding and selling of iron things, the hewing and sawing and planing of woods, the sowing and reaping and distribution of foods. They make a priestcraft and a ritual of artful language, and are ignorant of their own heresy. But since they deal in words, they have a fearful advantage and use it for their own glorification, as priests are wont to do.

Marie Louise had a vague insight into the truth, but was not aware of her own wisdom. She knew only that this Davidge who had made himself her gallant, her messenger and servant, was really a genius, a giant. She felt that the rôles should be reversed and she should be waiting upon him.

In Sir Joseph's house there nad been a bit of statuary

representing Hercules and Omphale. The mighty one was wearing the woman's kirtle and carrying her distaff, and the girl was staggering under the lion-skin and leaning on the bludgeon. Marie Louise always hated the group. It seemed to her to represent just the way so many women tried to master the men they infatuated. But Marie Louise despised masterable men, and she had no wish to make a toy of one. Yet she had wondered if a man and a woman could not love each other more perfectly if neither were master or mistress, but both on a parity—a team, indeed.

Davidge enjoyed talking to her, at least. That comforted her. When she came back from her meditations he was saying:

"My company is reaching out. We've bought a big tract of swamp, and we're filling it in and clearing it, and we're going to lay out a shipyard there and turn out ships—standardized ships—as fast as we can. We're steadying the ground first, sinking concrete piles in steel casing—if you put 'em end to end, they'd reach twenty-five miles. They're just to hold the ground together. That's what the whole country has got to do before it can really begin to begin—put some solid ground under its feet. When the ship is launched she mustn't stick on the ways or in the mud.

"Of course, I'd rather go as a soldier, but I've got no right to. I can ride or walk all day, and shoot straight and stand all kinds of weather, and killing Germans would just about tickle me to death. But this is a time when every man has got to do what he can do better than he can do anything else. And I've spent my life in shipyards.

"I was a common laborer first—swinging a sledge; I had an arm then! That was before we had compressed-air riveters. I was a union man and went on strike and fought scabs and made the bosses eat crow. Now I'm one of the bosses. I'm what they call a capitalist and an oppressor of labor. Now I put down strikes and fight the unions—not that I don't believe in 'em, not that I don't know where labor was before they had unions and where it would be without 'em to-day and to-morrow, but because all these things have to be adjusted gradually, and because the main thing, after all, is building ships—just now, of course, especially.

"When I was a workman I took pride in my job, and I thought I was an artist at it. I wouldn't take anybody's

lip. Now that I'm a boss I have to take everybody's lip, because I can't strike. I can't go to my boss and demand higher wages and easier hours, because my boss is the market. But I don't suppose there's anything on earth that interests you less than labor problems."

"They might if I knew the first thing about them."

"Well, the first thing is that they are the next war, the big war after this one's over. The job is to keep it down till peace comes. Then hell will pop—if you'll pardon my French. I'm all for labor getting its rights, but some of the men don't want the right to work—they want the right to loaf. I say let the sky be the limit of any man's opportunity—the sky and his own limitations and ambitions. But a lot of the workmen don't want opportunity; they've got no ambition; they hate to build things. They talk about the terrible conditions their families live in, and how gorgeously the rich men live. But the rich men were poor once, and the poor can be rich—if they can and will.

"The war is going to be the fight between the makers and the breakers, the uplifters and the down-draggers, you might say. And it's going to be some war!

"The men on the wrong side—what I call the wrong side, at least—are just as much our enemies as the Germans. We've got to watch 'em just as close. They'd just as soon burn an unfinished ship as the Germans would sink her when she's on her way.

"That little ship I'm building now! Would you believe it? It has to be guarded every minute. Most of our men are all right. They'd work themselves to death for the ship, and they pour out their sweat like prayers. But sneaks get in among 'em, and it only takes a fellow with a bomb one minute to undo the six months' work of a hundred."

"Tell me about your ship," she said.

A ship she could understand. It was personal and real; labor theories were as foreign to her as problems in metaphysics.

"Well, it's my first-born, this ship," he said. "Of course I've built a lot of other ships, but they were for other people—just jobs, for wages or commissions. This one is all my own—a freighter, ugly as sin and commodious as hell—I beg your pardon! But the world needs freighters—the

hungry mobs of Europe, they'll be glad to see my little ship come in, if ever she does. If she doesn't I'll— But she'll last a few trips before they submarine her—I guess."

He fell silent among his visions and left her to her own.

He saw himself wandering about a shipyard, a poor thing, but his own. His mind was like a mold-loft full of designs and detail-drawings to scale, blue-prints and models. On the way a ship was growing for him. As yet she was a ghastly thing all ribs, like the skeleton of some ancient sea-monster left ashore at high tide and perished eons back, leaving only the bones.

His fancy saw her transverses taking on their iron flesh. He saw the day of her nativity. He heard them knock out the blocks that lowered the sliding-ways to the groundways and sent her swirling into the sea.

He saw her ready for her cargo, saw a Niagara of wheat cascading into her hold. He saw her go forth into the sea.

Then he saw the ship stagger, a wound opened in her side, from the bullet of a submarine.

It was all so vivid that he spoke aloud in a frenzy of ire:

"If the Germans kill my ship I'll kill a German! By God, I will!"

He was startled by the sound of his own voice, and he begged her pardon humbly.

She had been away in reverie, too. The word "submarine" had sent her back into her haunting remembrances of the *Lusitania* and of her own helpless entanglement in the fate of other ships—their names as unknown to her as the names and faces of the men that died with them, or perished of starvation and thirst in the lifeboats sent adrift. The thought of these poor anonymities frightened her. She shuddered with such violence that Davidge was startled from his own wrath.

"You're having a chill," he said. "I wish you would take my coat. You don't want to get sick."

She shook her head and chattered, "No, no."

"Then you'd better get out and walk up and down this bridge awhile. There's not even a lap-robe here."

"I should like to walk, I think."

She stepped out, aided by his hand, a strong hand, and warm about her icy fingers. Her knees were weak, and he

set her elbow in the hollow of his arm and guided her. They walked like the blind leading the blind through a sea of pitch. The only glimmer was the little scratches of light pinked in the dead sky by a few stars.

"'It's beautiful overhead, if you're going that way,'" Davidge quoted.

He set out briskly, but Marie Louise hung back timidly.

"Not so fast! I can't see a thing."

"That's the best time to keep moving."

"But aren't you afraid to push on when you can't see where you're going?" she demanded.

"Who can ever tell where he's going? The sunlight is no guaranty. We're all bats in the daytime and not cats at night. The main thing is to sail on and on and on."

She caught a little of his recklessness—suffered him to hurry her to and fro through the inky air till she was panting for breath and tired. Then they groped to the rail and peered vainly down at the brook, which, like an unbroken child, was heard and not seen. They leaned their elbows on the rail and stared into the muffling gloom.

"I think I'll have another of your cigarettes," he said.

"So will I," said she.

There was a cozy fireside moment as they took their lights from the same match. When he threw the match overboard he said:

"Like a human life, eh? A little spark between dark and dark."

He was surprised at stumbling into rhyme, and apologized. But she said:

"Do you know, I rather like that. It reminds me of a poem about a rain-storm—Russell Lowell's, I fancy; it told of a flock of sheep scampering down a dusty road and clattering across a bridge and back to the dust again. He said it was like human life, 'a little noise between two silences.'"

"H'm!" was the best Davidge could do. But the agony of the brevity of existence seized them both by the hearts, and their hearts throbbed and bled like birds crushed in the claws of hawks. Their hearts had such capabilities of joy, such songs in them, such love and longing, such delight in beauty—and beauty was so beautiful, so frequent, so thrilling! Yet they could spend but a glance, a sigh, a regret, a gratitude,

and then their eyes were out, their ears still, their lips cold, their hearts dust. The ache of it was beyond bearing.

"Let's walk. I'm cold again," she whispered.

He felt that she needed the sense of hurry, and he went so fast that she had to run to keep up with him. There seemed to be some comfort in the privilege of motion for its own sake; motion was life; motion was godhood; motion was escape from the run-down clock of death.

Back and forth they kept their promenade, till her body refused to answer the whips of restlessness. Her brain began to shut up shop. It would do no more thinking this night.

She stumbled toward the taxicab. Davidge lifted her in, and she sank down, completely done. She fell asleep.

Davidge took his place in the cab and wondered lazily at the quaint adventure. He was only slightly concerned with wondering at the cause of her uneasiness. He was used to minding his own business.

She slept so well that when the groping search-light of a coming automobile began to slash the night and the rubber wheels boomed across the bridge she did not waken. If the taxi-driver heard its sound, he preferred to pretend not to. The passengers in the passing car must have been surprised, but they took their wonderment with them. We so often imagine mischief when there is innocence and *vice versa;* for opportunity is just as likely to create distaste as interest and the lack of it to instigate enterprise.

Davidge drowsed and smiled contentedly in the dark and did not know that he was not awake until at some later time he was half aroused by the meteoric glow and whiz of another automobile. It had gone before he was quite awake, and he sank back into sleep.

Before he knew it, many black hours had slid by and daylight was come; the rosy fingers of light were moving about, recreating the world to vision, sketching a landscape hazily on a black canvas, then stippling in the colors, and finishing, swiftly but gradually, the details to an inconceivable minuteness of definition, giving each leaf its own sharp contour and every rock its every facet. From the brook below a mistlike cigarette smoke exhaled. The sky was crimson, then pink, then amber, then blue.

Birds began to twitter, to fashion little crystal stanzas,

and to hurl themselves about the valley as if catapults propelled them. One songster perched on the iron rail of the bridge and practised a vocal lesson, cocking his head from side to side and seeming to approve his own skill.

A furred caterpillar resumed his march across the Appian Way, making of each crack between boards a great abyss to be bridged cautiously with his own body. The day's work was begun, while Davidge drowsed and smiled contentedly at the side of the strange, sleeping woman as if they had been married for years.

CHAPTER IV

THE sky was filled with morning when a noise startled Davidge out of nullity. He was amazed to find a strange woman asleep at his elbow. He remembered her suddenly.

With a clatter of wheels and cans and hoofs a milkman's wagon and team came out of the hills. Davidge stepped down from the car and stopped the loud-voiced, wide-mouthed driver with a gesture. He spoke in a low voice which the milkman did not copy. The taxi-driver woke to the extent of one eye and a horrible yawn, while Davidge explained his plight.

"Gasolene gave out, hey?" said the milkman.

"It certainly did," said Davidge, "and I'd be very much obliged if you'd get me some more."

"Wa-all, I'm purty busy."

"I'll pay you anything you ask."

The milkman was modest in his ambitions.

"How'd two dollars strike ye?"

"Five would be better if you hurried."

This looked suspicious, but the milkman consented.

"Wa-all, all right, but what would I fetch the gasolene in?"

"One of your milk-cans."

"They're all fuller melk."

"I'll buy one, milk and all."

"Wa-all, I reckon I'll hev to oblige you."

"Here's five dollars on account. There'll be five more when you get back."

"Wa-all, all ri-ight. Get along there, Jawn Henry."

John Henry got along. Even his *cloppety-clop* did not waken Miss Webling.

The return of the rattletrap and the racket of filling the tank with the elixir finished her sleep, however. She woke

in confusion, finding herself sitting up, dressed, in her little room, with three strange men at work outside.

When the tank was filled, Davidge entered her compartment with a cheery "Good morning," and slammed the door after him. The gasolene, like the breath of a god, gave life to the dead. The car snarled and jumped, and went roaring across the bridge, up the hill and down another, and down that and up another.

Here they caught, through a frame of leaves, a glimpse of Washington in the sunrise, a great congregation of marble temples and trees and sky-colored waters, the shaft of the Monument lighted with the milky radiance of a mountain peak on its upper half, the lower part still dusk with valley shadow, and across the plateau of roofs the solemn Capitol in as mythical a splendor as the stately dome that Kubla Khan decreed in Xanadu.

This sight of Canaan from Pisgah-height was no luxury to the taxi-driver, and he hustled his coffee-grinder till he reached Rosslyn once more, crossed the Potomac's many-tinted stream, and rattled through Georgetown and the shabby, sleeping little shops of M Street into the tree-tunnels of Washington.

He paused to say, "Where do we go from here?"

Davidge and Marie Louise looked their chagrin. They still had no place to go.

"To the Pennsylvania Station," said Davidge. "We can at least get breakfast there."

The streets of Washington are never so beautiful as at this still hour when nothing stirs but the wind in the trees and the grass on the lawns, and hardly anybody is abroad except the generals on their bronze horses fronting their old battles with heroic eyes. The station outside was something Olympic but unfrequented. Inside, it was a vast cathedral of untenanted pews.

Davidge paid the driver a duke's ransom. There was no porter about, and he carried Marie Louise's suit-cases to the parcel-room. Her baggage had had a long journey. She retreated to the women's room for what toilet she could make, and came forth with a very much washed face. Somnambulistic negroes took their orders at the lunch-counter.

Marie Louise had weakly decided to return to New York

again, but the hot coffee was full of defiance, and she said that she would make another try at Mrs. Widdicombe as soon as a human hour arrived.

And she showed a tactfulness that won much respect from Davidge when she said:

"Do get your morning paper and read it. I'm sure I have nothing to say that I haven't said, and if I had, it could wait till you find out how the battle goes in Europe."

He bought her a paper, too, and they sat on a long bench, exchanging comments on the news that made almost every front page a chapter in world history.

She heard him groan with rage. When she looked up he pointed to the submarine record of that week.

"Last week the losses took a horrible jump—forty ships of over sixteen hundred tons. This week it's almost as bad—thirty-eight ships of over sixteen hundred, thirteen ships under, and eight fishing-vessels. Think of it—all of 'em merchant-ships!

"Pretty soon I've got to send my ship out to run the gantlet. She's like Little Red Riding Hood going through the forest to take old Granny Britain some food. And the wolves are waiting for her. What a race of people, what a pack of beasts!"

Marie Louise had an idea. "I'll tell you a pretty name for your ship—*Little Red Riding Hood.* Why don't you give her that?"

He laughed. "The name would be heavier than the cargo. I wonder what the crew would make of it. No, this ship, my first one, is to be named after"—he lowered his voice as one does on entering a church—"after my mother."

"Oh, that's beautiful!" Marie Louise said. "And will she be there to christen— Oh, I remember, you said—"

He nodded three or four times in wretchedness. But the grief was his own, and he must not exploit it. He assumed an abrupt cheer.

"I'll name the next ship after you, if you don't mind."

This was too glorious to be believed. What bouquet or jewel could equal it? She clapped her hands like a child hearing a Christmas promise.

"What is your first name, Miss Webling?"

She suddenly realized that they were not, after all, such old friends as the night had seemed to make them.

"My first two names," she said, "are Marie Louise."

"Oh! Well, then we'll call the ship *Marie Louise*."

She saw that he was a little disappointed in the name, so she said:

"When I was a girl they called me Mamise."

She was puzzled to see how this startled him.

He jumped audibly and fastened a searching gaze on her. Mamise! He had thought of Mamise when he saw her, and now she gave the name. Could she possibly be the Mamise he remembered? He started to ask her, but checked himself and blushed. A fine thing it would be to ask this splendid young princess, "Pardon me, Princess, but were you playing in cheap vaudeville a few years ago?" It was an improbable coincidence that he should meet her thus, but an almost impossible coincidence that she should wear both the name and the mien of Mamise and not be Mamise. But he dared not ask her.

She noted his blush and stammer, but she was afraid to ask their cause.

"*Mamise* it shall be," he said.

And she answered, "I was never so honored in my life."

"Of course," he warned her, "the boat isn't built yet. In fact, the new yard isn't built yet. There's many a slip 'twixt the keel and the ship. She might never live to be launched. Some of these sneaking loafers on our side may blow her up before the submarines get a chance at her."

There he was, speaking of submarines once more! She shivered, and she looked at the clock and got up and said:

"I think I'll try Mrs. Widdicombe now."

"Let me go along," said Davidge.

But she shook her head. "I've taken enough of your life—for the present."

Trying to concoct a felicitous reply, he achieved only an eloquent silence. He put her and her luggage aboard a taxi-cab, and then she gave him her most cordial hand.

"I could never hope to thank you enough," she said, "and I won't begin to try. Send me your address when you have one, and I'll mail you Mrs. Widdicombe's confidential tele-

phone-number. I do want to see you soon again, unless you've had enough of me for a lifetime."

He did very handsomely by the lead she gave him:

"I couldn't have enough—not in a lifetime."

The taxi-driver snipped the strands of their gaze as he whisked her away.

Marie Louise felt a forenoon elation in the cool air and the bright streets, thick with men and women in herds hurrying to their patriotic tasks, and a multitude of officers and enlisted men seeking their desks. She was here to join them, and she hoped that it would not be too hard to find some job with a little thrill of service in it.

As she went through Georgetown now M Street was different—full of marketers and of briskness. The old bridge was crowded. As her car swooped up the hills and skirted the curves to Polly Widdicombe's she began to be afraid again. But she was committed to the adventure and she was eager for the worst of it. She found the house without trouble and saw in the white grove of columns Polly herself, bidding good-by to her husband, whose car was waiting at the foot of the steps.

Polly hailed Marie Louise with cries of such delight that before the cab had made the circle and drawn up at the steps the hunted look was gone and youth come back to Marie Louise's anxious smile. Polly kissed her and presented her husband, pointing to the gold leaves on his shoulders with militaristic pride.

Widdicombe blushed and said: "Fearless desk-fighter has to hurry off to battle with ruthless stenographers. Such are the horrors of war!"

He insisted on paying Marie Louise's driver, though she said, "Women will never be free so long as men insist on paying all their bills."

Polly said: "Hush, or the brute will set me free!"

He kissed Polly, waved to Marie Louise, stepped into his car, and shot away.

Polly watched him with devout eyes and said:

"Poor boy! he's dying to get across into the trenches, but they won't take him because he's a little near-sighted, thank God! And he works like a dog, day and night." Then she returned to the rites of hospitality. "Had your breakfast?"

"At the station." The truth for once coincided very pleasantly with convenience.

"Then I know what you want," said Polly, "a bath and a nap. After that all-night train-trip you ought to be a wreck."

"I am."

Polly led her to a welcoming room that would have been quite pretty enough if it had had only a bed and a chair. Marie Louise felt as if she had come out of the wilderness into a city of refuge. Polly had an engagement, a committee meeting of women war-workers, and would not be back until luncheon-time. Marie Louise steeped herself in a hot tub, then in a long sweet sleep in a real bed. She was wakened by the voices of children, and looked out from her window to see the Widdicombe tots drilling in a company of three with a drum, a flag, and a wooden gun. The American army was not much bigger compared with the European nations in arms, but it would grow.

Polly came home well charged with electricity, the new-woman idea that was claiming half of the war, the true squaw-spirit that takes up the drudgery at home while the braves go out to swap missiles with the enemy. When Marie Louise said that she, too, had come to Washington to get into harness somewhere, Polly promised her a plethora of opportunities.

At luncheon Polly was reminded of the fact that a photographer was coming over from Washington. He had asked for sittings, and she had acceded to his request.

"I never can get photographs enough of my homely self," said Polly. "I'm always hoping that by some accident the next one will make me look as I want to look—make ithers see me as I see mysel'!"

When the camera-man arrived Polly insisted that Marie Louise must pose, too, and grew so urgent that she consented at last, to quiet her. They spent a harrowing afternoon striking attitudes all over the place, indoors and out, standing, sitting, heads and half-lengths, profile and three-quarters and full face. Their muscles ached with the struggle to assume and retain beatific expressions on an empty soul.

The consequences of that afternoon of self-impersonation were far-reaching for Marie Louise.

According to the Washingtonian custom, one of the new photographs appeared the following Sunday in each of the four newspapers. The Sunday after that Marie Louise's likeness appeared with "Dolly Madison's" and Jean Elliott's syndicated letters on "The Week in Washington" in Sunday supplements throughout the country. Every now and then her likeness popped out at her from *Town and Country*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazar*, *The Spur*, what not?

One of those countless images fell into the hands of Jake Nuddle, who had been keeping an incongruous eye on the Sunday supplements for some time. This time the double of Mamise was not posed as a farmerette in an English landscape, but as a woman of fashion in a Colonial drawing-room.

He hurried to his wife with the picture, and she called it "Mamise" with a recrudescent anguish of doubt.

"She's in this country now, the paper says," said Jake. "She's in Washington, and if I was you I'd write her a little letter astin' her is she our sister."

Mrs. Nuddle was crying too loosely to note that "our." The more Jake considered the matter the less he liked the thought of waiting for a letter to go and an answer to come.

"Meet 'em face to face; that's me!" he declared at last. "I think I'll just take a trip to the little old capital m'self. I can tell the rest the c'mittee I'm goin' to put a few things up to some them Senators and Congersmen. That 'll get my expenses paid for me."

There simply was nobody that Jake Nuddle would not cheat, if he could.

His always depressing wife suggested: "Supposin' the lady says she ain't Mamise, how you goin' to prove she is? You never seen her."

Jake snarled at her for a fool, but he knew that she was right. He resisted the dismal necessity as long as he could, and then extended one of his most cordial invitations:

"Aw, hell! I reckon I'll have to drag you along."

He grumbled and cursed his fate and resolved to make Mamise pay double for ruining his excursion.

CHAPTER V

FOR a time Marie Louise had the solace of being busy and of nibbling at the edge of great occasions. The nation was reconstituting its whole life, and Washington was the capital of all the Allied peoples, their brazen serpent and their promise of salvation. Almost everybody was doing with his or her might what his or her hand found to do. Repetition and contradiction of effort abounded; there was every confusion of counsel and of action. But the Republic was gathering itself for a mighty leap into the arena. For the first time women were being not merely permitted, but pleaded with, to lend their aid.

Marie Louise rolled bandages at a Red Cross room presided over by a pleasant widow, Mrs. Perry Merithew, with a son in the aviation, who was forever needing bandages. Mamise tired of these, bought a car and joined the Women's Motor Corps. She had a collision with a reckless wretch named "Pet" Bettany, and resigned. She helped with big festivals, toiled day and night at sweaters, and finally bought herself a knitting-machine and spun out half a dozen pairs of socks a day, by keeping a sweatshop pace for sweatshop hours. She was trying to find a more useful job. The trouble was that everybody wanted to be at something, to get into a uniform of some sort, to join the universal mobilization.

She went out little of evenings, preferring to keep herself in the seclusion of the Rosslyn home. Gradually her fears subsided and she felt that her welcome was wearing through. She began to look for a place to live. Washington was in a panic of rentals. Apartments cost more than houses. A modest creature who had paid seventy-five dollars a month for a little flat let it for five hundred a month for the duration of the war. A gorgeous Sultana who had a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar-a-month apartment rented it for a thousand dollars a month "for the duration." Marie Louise had money

enough, but she could hardly find anything that it would buy.

She planned to secure a clerical post in some of the offices. She took up shorthand and poked a typewriter and read books on system and efficiency, then gave them up as Greek.

Once in a while she saw Ross Davidge. He suffered an intermittent fever of hope and despondency. He, too, was trying to do his bit, but he was lost in the maelstrom swirling through the channels of official life. He would come to town for a few days, wait about, fuming, and return in disgust to his shipyard. It was not altogether patriotism that pulled him back to Washington. Marie Louise was there, and he lost several appointments with the great folk he came to see, because their hours clashed with Marie Louise's.

On one of his voyages he was surprised to find at his hotel an invitation to dine at Mrs. Prothero's. Little as he knew of the eminent ones of the fashionable world, he knew the famous name of Prothero. He had spoken with reverence always of her late husband, one of the rebuilders of the American navy, a voice crying in the wilderness for a revival of the ancient glories of the merchant marine. Davidge had never met him or his widow. He felt that he could not refuse the unexplained opportunity to pay at least his respects to the relict of his idol.

But he wondered by what means Mrs. Prothero, whom everybody had heard of, had heard of him. When he entered her door on the designated evening his riddle was answered.

The butler glanced at his card, then picked from a heap on the console a little envelop which he proffered on his tray. The envelop was about the size of those that new-born parents use to inclose the proclamation of the advent of a new-born infant. The card inside Davidge's envelop carried the legend, "Miss Webling."

The butler led him to the drawing-room door and announced him. There indeed was Marie Louise, arm in arm with a majestic granddam in a coronet of white hair.

Marie Louise put out her hand, and Davidge went to it. She clasped his and passed it on to Mrs. Prothero with a character:

"This is the great Mr. Davidge, the shipwright."

Mrs. Prothero pressed his hand and kept it while she said:

"It is like Marie Louise to bring youth to cheer up an old crone like me."

Davidge muffed the opening horribly. Instead of saying something brilliant about how young Mrs. Prothero looked, he said:

"Youth? I'm a hundred years old."

"You are!" Mrs. Prothero cried. "Then how old does that make me, in the Lord's name—a million?"

Davidge could not even recover the foot he had put in it. By looking foolish and keeping silent he barely saved himself from adding the other foot. Mrs. Prothero smiled at his discomfiture.

"Don't worry. I'm too ancient to be caught by pretty speeches—or to like the men who have 'em always ready."

She pressed his hand again and turned to welcome the financial Cyclops, James Dyckman, and his huge wife, and Captain Fargeton, a foreign military attaché with service chevrons and wound-chevrons and a *croix de guerre*, and a wife, who had been Mildred Tait.

"All that and an American spouse!" said Davidge to Marie Louise.

"Have you never had an American spouse?" she asked, brazenly.

"Not one!" he confessed.

Major and Polly Widdicombe had come in with Marie Louise, and Davidge drifted into their circle. The great room filled gradually with men of past or future fame, and the poor women who were concerned in enduring its acquisition.

Marie Louise was radiant in mood and queenly in attire. Davidge was startled by the magnificence of her jewelry. Some of it was of old workmanship, royal heirloomry. Her accent was decidedly English, yet her race was undoubtedly American. The many things about her that had puzzled him subconsciously began to clamor at least for the attention of curiosity. He watched her making the best of herself, as a skilful woman does when she is all dressed up in handsome scenery among toplofty people.

Polly was describing the guests as they came in:

"That's Colonel Harvey Forbes. His name has been sent to Congress for approval as a brigadier-general. I knew him in the midst of the wildest scandal—remind me to tell you.

He was only a captain then. He'll probably end as a king or something. This war is certainly good to some people."

Davidge watched Marie Louise studying the somber officer. He was a bit jealous, shamed by his own civilian clothes. Suddenly Marie Louise's smile at Polly's chatter stopped short, shriveled, then returned to her face with a look of effort. Her muscles seemed to be determined that her lips should not droop.

Davidge heard the butler announce:

"Lady Clifton-Wyatt and General Sir Hector Havendish."

Davidge wondered which of the two names could have so terrified Marie Louise. Naturally he supposed that it was the man's. He turned to study the officer in his British uniform. He saw a tall, loose-jointed, jovial man of horsy look and carriage, and no hint of mystery—one would say an intolerance of mystery.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt was equally amiable. She laughed and wrung the hands of Mrs. Prothero. They were like two schoolgirls met in another century.

Davidge noted that Marie Louise turned her back and listened with extraordinary interest to Major Widdicombe's old story about an Irishman who did or said something or other. Davidge heard Mrs. Prothero say to Lady Clifton-Wyatt, with all the joy in the world:

"Who do you suppose is here but our Marie Louise?"

"Our Marie Louise?" Lady Clifton-Wyatt echoed, with a slight chill.

"Yes, Marie Louise Webling. It was at her house that I met you. Where has the child got to? There she is."

Without raising her voice she focused it between Marie Louise's shoulder-blades.

"Marie Louise, my dear!"

Marie Louise turned and came up like a wax image on casters pulled forward by an invisible window-dresser. Lady Clifton-Wyatt's limber attitude grew erect, deadly, ominously hostile. She looked as if she would turn Marie Louise to stone with a Medusa glare, but she evidently felt that she had no right to commit petrifaction in Mrs. Prothero's home; so she bowed and murmured:

"Ah, yis! How are you?"

To Davidge's amazement, Miss Webling, instead of meeting

the rebuff in kind, wavered before it and bowed almost gratefully. Then, to Davidge's confusion, Lady Clifton-Wyatt marched on him with a gush of cordiality as if she had been looking for him around the Seven Seas. She remembered him, called him by name and told him that she had seen his pickchah in one of the papahs, as one of the creatahs of the new fleet.

Mrs. Prothero was stunned for a moment by the scene, but she had passed through so many women's wars that she had learned to ignore them even when—especially when—her drawing-room was the battleground.

Her mind was drawn from the incident by the materialization of the butler.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt, noting that the tide was setting toward the dining-room and that absent-minded Sir Hector was floating along the current at the elbow of the pretty young girl, said to Davidge:

"Are you taking me out or—"

It was a horrible moment, for all its unimportance, but he mumbled:

"I—I am sorry, but—er—Miss Webling—

"Oh! Ah!" said Lady Clifton-Wyatt. It was a very short "Oh!" and a very long "Ah!" a sort of gliding, crushing "Ah!" It went over him like a tank, leaving him flat.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt reached Sir Hector's arm in a few strides and unhooked him from the girl—also the girl from him. The girl was grateful. Sir Hector was used to disappointments.

Davidge went to Marie Louise, who stood lonely and distraught. He felt ashamed of his word "sorry" and hoped she hadn't heard it. Silently and crudely he angled his arm, and she took it and went along with him in a somnambulism.

Davidge, manlike, tried to cheer up his elbow-mate by a compliment. A man's first aid to a woman in distress is a compliment or a few pats of the hand. He said:

"This is the second big dinner you and I have attended. There were bushels of flowers between us before, but I'd rather see your face than a ton of roses."

The compliment fell out like a ton of coal. He did not like it at all. She seemed not to have heard him, for she murmured:

"Yis, isn't it?"

Then, as the occultists say, he went into the silence. There is nothing busier than a silence at a dinner. The effort to think with no outlet in speech kept up such a roaring in his head that he could hardly grasp what the rest were saying.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt sat at Davidge's right and kept invading his quiet communion with Marie Louise by making remarks of the utmost graciousness somehow fermented—like wine turned vinegar.

"I wonder if you remember when we met in London, Mr. Davidge? It was just after the poor *Lusitania* was sunk."

"So it was," said Davidge.

"It was at Sir Joseph Webling's. You knew he was dead, didn't you? Or did you?"

"Yes, Miss Webling told me."

"Oh, did she! I was curious to know."

She cast a look past him at Marie Louise and saw that the girl was about ready to make a scene. She smiled and deferred further torture.

Mrs. Prothero supervened. She had the beautiful theory that the way to make her guests happy was to get them to talking about themselves. She tried to draw Davidge out of his shell. But he talked about her husband instead, and of the great work he had done for the navy. He turned the tables of graciousness on her. Her nod recognized the chivalry; her lips smiled with pride in her husband's praise; her eyes glistened with an old regret made new. "He would have been useful now," she sighed.

"He was the man who laid the keel-blocks of our new navy," said Davidge. "The thing we haven't got and have got to get is a merchant marine."

He could talk of that, though he could not celebrate himself. He was still going strong when the dinner was finished.

Mrs. Prothero clung to the old custom. She took the women away with her to the drawing-room, leaving the men alone.

Davidge noted that Lady Clifton-Wyatt left the dining-room with a kind of eagerness, Marie Louise reluctantly. She cast him a look that seemed to cry "Help!" He wondered what the feud could be that threw Miss Webling into such apparent panic. He could not tolerate the thought that she had a yellow streak in her.

CHAPTER VI

LADY CLIFTON-WYATT, like many another woman, was kept in order by the presence of men. She knew that the least charming of attributes in masculine eyes are the female feline, the gift and art of claws.

Men can be catty, too—tom-catty, yet contemptibly feline when they are not on their good behavior. There are times when the warning, "Gentlemen, there are ladies present," restores them to order as quickly as the entrance of a teacher turns a school-room of young savages into an assembly of young saints.

The women in Mrs. Prothero's drawing-room could not hear any of the words the men mixed with their smoke, but they could hear now and then a muffled explosion of laughter of a quality that indicated what had provoked it.

The women, too, were relieved of a certain constraint by their isolation. They seemed to enjoy the release. It was like getting their minds out of tight corsets. They were not impatient for the men—as some of the men may have imagined. These women were of an age where they had something else to think of besides men. They had careers to make or keep among women as well as the men among men.

The servants kept them on guard till the coffee, tobacco, and liqueurs were distributed. Then recess was declared. Marie Louise found herself on a huge tapestried divan provided with deep, soft cushions that held her like a quicksands. On one side of her was the mountainous Mrs. Dyckman resembling a stack of cushions cased in silk; on the other was Mildred Tait Fargeton, whose father had been ambassador to France.

Marie Louise listened to their chatter with a frantic impatience. Polly was heliographing ironic messages with her eyes. Polly was hemmed in by the wife of a railroad juggler, who was furious at the Administration because it did not put

all its transportation problems in her husband's hands. She would not have intrusted him with the buying of a spool of thread; but that was different.

Mrs. Prothero was monopolized by Lady Clifton-Wyatt. Marie Louise could see that she herself was the theme of the talk, for Mrs. Prothero kept casting startled glances Marie-Louise-ward, and Lady Clifton-Wyatt glances of baleful stealth.

Marie Louise had proved often enough that she was no coward, but even the brave turn poltroon when they fight without a sense of justification. Her pride told her that she ought to cross over to Lady Clifton-Wyatt and demand that she speak up. But her sense of guilt robbed her of her courage. And that oath she had given to Mr. Verrinder without the least reluctance now loomed before her as the greatest mistake of her life. Her sword and shield were both in pawn.

She gave herself up for lost and had only one hope, that the men would not come in—especially that Ross Davidge would not come in in time to learn what Lady Clifton-Wyatt was so eager to publish. She gave Mrs. Prothero up for lost, too, and Polly. But she wanted to keep Ross Davidge fond of her.

Then in a lull Mrs. Prothero spoke up sharply:

"I simply can't believe it, my dear. I don't know that I ever saw a German spy, but that child is not one. I'd stake my life on it."

"And now the avalanche!" thought Marie Louise.

The word "spy" was beginning to have more than an academic or fictional interest to Americans, and it caught the ear of every person present.

Mrs. Dyckman and Mme. Fargeton sat up as straight as their curves permitted and gasped:

"A German spy! Who? Where?"

Polly Widdicombe sprang to her feet and darted to Mrs. Prothero's side.

"Oh, how lovely! Tell me who she is! I'm dying to shoot a spy."

Marie Louise sickened at the bloodthirstiness of Polly the insouciante.

Mrs. Prothero tried to put down the riot of interest by saying:

"Oh, it's nothing. Lady Clifton-Wyatt is just joking."

Lady Clifton-Wyatt was at bay. She shot a glance at Marie Louise and insisted:

"Indeed I'm not! I tell you she is a spy."

"Who's a spy?" Polly demanded.

"Miss Webling," said Lady Clifton-Wyatt.

Polly began to giggle; then she frowned with disappointment.

"Oh, I thought you meant it."

"I do mean it, and if you'll take my advice you'll be warned in time."

Polly turned, expecting to find Marie Louise showing her contemptuous amusement, but the look she saw on Marie Louise's face was disconcerting. Polly's loyalty remained staunch. She hated Lady Clifton-Wyatt anyway, and the thought that she might be telling the truth made her a little more hatable. Polly stormed:

"I won't permit you to slander my best friend."

Lady Clifton-Wyatt replied, "I don't slahnda hah, and if she is yaw best friend—well—"

Lady Clifton-Wyatt hated Polly and was glad of the weapon against her. Polly felt a sudden terrific need of retorting with a blow. Men had never given up the fist on the mouth as the simple, direct answer to an insult too complicated for any other retort. She wanted to slap Lady Clifton-Wyatt's face. But she did not know how to fight. Perhaps women will acquire the male prerogative of the smash in the jaw along with the other once exclusive masculine privileges. It will do them no end of good and help to clarify all life for them. But for the present Polly could only groan, "Agh!" and turn to throw an arm about Marie Louise and drag her forward.

"I'd believe one word of Marie Louise against a thousand of yours," she declared.

"Very well—ahsk hah, then."

Polly was crying mad, and madder than ever because she hated herself for crying when she got mad. She almost sobbed now to Marie Louise, "Tell her it's a dirty, rotten lie."

Marie Louise had been dragged to her feet. She temporized, "What has she sai-said?"

Polly snickered nervously, "Oh, nothing—except that you were a German spy."

And now somewhere, somehow, Marie Louise found the courage of desperation. She laughed:

"Lady Clifton-Wyatt is notori—famous for her quaint sense of humor."

Lady Clifton-Wyatt sneered, "Could one expect a spy to admit it?"

Marie Louise smiled patiently. "Probably not. But surely even you would hardly insist that denying it proves it?"

This sophistry was too tangled for Polly. She spoke up: "Let's have the details, Lady Clifton-Wyatt—if you don't mind."

"Yes, yes," the chorus murmured.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt braced herself. "Well, in the first place Miss Webling is not Miss Webling."

"Oh, but I am," said Marie Louise.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt gasped, "You don't mean to pretend that—"

"Did you read the will?" said Marie Louise.

"No, of course not, but—"

"It says there that I was their daughter."

"Well, we'll not quibble. Legally you may have been, but actually you were their adopted child."

"Yis?" said Marie Louise. "And where did they find me? Had you heard?"

"Since you force me to it, I must say that it is generally believed that you were the natural daughter of Sir Joseph."

Marie Louise was tremendously relieved by having something that she could deny. She laughed with a genuineness that swung the credulity all her way. She asked:

"And who was my mother—my natural mother, could you tell me? I really ought to know."

"She is believed to have been a—a native of Australia."

"Good Heavens! You don't mean a kangaroo?"

"An actress playing in Vienna."

"Oh, I am relieved! And Sir Joseph was my father—yes. Do go on."

"Whether Sir Joseph was your father or not, he was born in Germany and so was his wife, and they took a false oath of allegiance to his Majesty. All the while they were loyal only to the Kaiser. They worked for him, spied for him. It is said that the Kaiser had promised to make Sir Joseph one

of the rulers over England when he captured the island. Sir Joseph was to have any castle he wanted and untold wealth."

"What was I to have?" Marie Louise was able to mock her. "Wasn't I to have at least Westminster Abbey to live in? And one of the crown princes for a husband?"

Lady Clifton-Wyatt lost her temper and her bearings.

"Heaven knows what you were promised, but you did your best to earn it, whatever it was."

Mrs. Prothero lost patience. "Really, my dear Lady Clifton-Wyatt, this is all getting beyond me."

Lady Clifton-Wyatt grew scarlet, too. She spoke with the wrath of a Tisiphone whipping herself to a frenzy. "I will bring you proofs. This creature was a paid secret agent, a go-between for Sir Joseph and the Wilhelmstrasse. She carried messages. She went into the slums of Whitechapel disguised as a beggar to meet the conspirators. She carried them lists of ships with their cargoes, dates of sailing, destinations. She carried great sums of money. She was the paymaster of the spies. Her hands are red with the blood of British sailors and women and children. She grew so bold that at last she attracted the attention of even Scotland Yard. She was followed, traced to Sir Joseph's home. It was found that she lived at his house.

"One of the spies, named Easling or Oesten, was her lover. He was caught and met his deserts before a firing-squad in the Tower. His confession implicated Sir Joseph. The police raided his place. A terrific fight ensued. He resisted arrest. He tried to shoot one of our police. The bullet went wild and killed his wife. Before he could fire again he was shot down by one of our men."

The astonishing transformations the story had undergone in its transit from gossip to gossip stunned Marie Louise. The memory of the reality saddened her beyond laughter. Her distress was real, but she had self-control enough to focus it on Lady Clifton-Wyatt and murmur:

"Poor thing, she is quite mad!"

There is nothing that so nearly drives one insane as to be accused of insanity.

The prosecutrix almost strangled on her indignation at Marie Louise's calm.

"The effrontery of this woman is unendurable, Mrs.

Prothero. If you believe her, you must permit me to leave. I know what I am saying. I have had what I tell you from the best authority. Of course, it may sound insane, but wait until you learn what the German secret agents have been doing in America for years and what they are doing now."

There had been publication enough of the sickening duplicity of ambassadors and attachés to lead the Americans to believe that Teutonism meant anything revolting. Mrs. Prothero was befuddled at this explosion in her quiet home. She asked:

"But surely all this has never been published, has it? I think we should have heard of it here."

"Of course not," said Lady Clifton-Wyatt. "We don't publish the accounts of the submarines we sink, do we? No more do we tell the Germans what spies of theirs we have captured. And, since Sir Joseph and his wife were dead, there would have been no profit in publishing broadcast the story of the battle. So they agreed to let it be known that they died peacefully or rather painfully in their beds, of ptomaine poisoning."

"That's true," said Mrs. Prothero. "That's what I read. That's what I've always understood."

Now, curiously, as often happens in court, the discovery that a witness has stumbled on one truth in a pack of lies renders all he has said authentic and shifts the guilt to the other side. Marie Louise could feel the frost of suspicion against her forming in the air.

Polly made one more onset: "But, tell me, Lady Clifton-Wyatt, where was Marie Louise during all this Wild West End pistol-play?"

"In her room with her lover," snarled Lady Clifton-Wyatt. "The servants saw her there."

This threw a more odious light on Marie Louise. She was not merely a nice clean spy, but a wanton.

Polly groaned: "Tell that to Scotland Yard! I'd never believe it."

"Scotland Yard knows it without my telling," said Lady Clifton-Wyatt.

"But how did Marie Louise come to escape and get to America?"

"Because England did not want to shoot a woman, especially

not a young woman of a certain prettiness. So they let her go, when she swore that she would never return to England. But they did not trust her. She is under observation now! Your home is watched, my dear Mrs. Widdicombe, and I dare say there is a man on guard outside now, my dear Mrs. Prothero."

This sent a chill along every spine. Marie Louise was frightened out of her own brief bravado.

There was a lull in the trial while everybody reveled in horror. Then Mrs. Prothero spoke in a judicial tone.

"And now, Miss Webling, please tell us your side of all this. What have you to say in your own behalf?"

Marie Louise's mouth suddenly turned dry as bark; her tongue was like a dead leaf. She was inarticulate with remembrance of her oath to Verrinder. She just managed to whisper:

"Nothing!"

It sounded like an autumn leaf rasping across a stone. Polly cried out in agony:

"Marie Louise!"

Marie Louise shook her head and could neither think nor speak. There was a hush of waiting. It was broken by the voices of the men strolling in together. They were utterly unwelcome. They stopped and stared at the women all staring at Marie Louise.

Seeing Davidge about to ask what the tableau stood for, she found voice to say:

"Mr. Davidge, would you be so good as to take me home—to Mrs. Widdicombe's, that is. I—I am a little faint."

"Delighted! I mean—I'm sorry—I'd be glad," he stammered, eager to be at her service, yet embarrassed by the sudden appeal.

"You'll pardon me, Mrs. Prothero, for running away!"

"Of course," said Mrs. Prothero, still dazed.

He bowed to her, and all round. Marie Louise nodded and whispered, "Good night!" and moved toward the door waveringly. Davidge's heart leaped with pity for her.

Lady Clifton-Wyatt checked him as he hurried past her.

"Oh, Mr. Davidge, I'm stopping at the Shoreham. Won't you drop in and have a cup of tea with me to-morrow at hahf pahst fah?"

"Thank you! Yes!"

CHAPTER VII

THE intended victim of Lady Clifton-Wyatt's little lynching-bee walked away, holding her head high. But she felt the noose still about her neck and wondered when the rope would draw her back and up.

Marie Louise marched through Mrs. Prothero's hall in excellent form, with just the right amount of dizziness to justify her escape on the plea of sudden illness. The butler, like a benign destiny, opened the door silently and let her out into the open as once before in London a butler had opened a door and let her into the welcome refuge of walls.

She gulped the cool night air thirstily, and it gave her courage. But it gave her no wisdom. She had indeed got away from Lady Clifton-Wyatt's direct accusation of being a spy and she had brought with her unscathed the only man whose good opinion was important to her. But she did not know what she wanted to do with him, except that she did not want him to fall into Lady Clifton-Wyatt's hands—in which she had left her reputation.

Polly Widdicombe would have gone after Marie Louise forthwith, but Polly did not intend to leave her pet foewoman in possession of the field—not that she loved Marie Louise more, but that she loved Lady Clifton-Wyatt less. Polly was dazed and bewildered by Marie Louise's defection, but she would not accept Lady Clifton-Wyatt's version of this story or of any other.

Besides, Polly gleaned that Marie Louise wanted to be alone, and she knew that the best gift friendship can bestow at times is solitude. The next best gift is defense in absence. Polly announced that she would not permit her friend to be traduced; and Lady Clifton-Wyatt, seeing that the men had flocked in from the dining-room and knowing that men always discount one woman's attack on

another as mere cattiness, assumed her most angelic mien and changed the subject.

As usual in retreats, the first problem was transportation. Marie Louise found herself and Davidge outside Mrs. Prothero's door, with no means of getting to Rosslyn. She had come in the Widdicombe car; Davidge had come in a hotel cab and sent it away. Luckily at last a taxi returning to the railroad terminal whizzed by. Davidge yelled in vain, Then he put his two fingers to his mouth and let out a short blast that brought the taxi-driver round. In accordance with the traffic rules, he had to make the circuit of the big statue-crowned circle in front of Mrs. Prothero's home, one of those numerous hubs that give Washington the effect of what some one called "revolving streets."

When he drew up at the curb Davidge's first question was:

"How's your gasolene supply?"

"Full up, boss."

Marie Louise laughed. "You don't want to spend another night in a taxi with me, I see."

Davidge writhed at this deduction. He started to say, "I'd be glad to spend the rest of my life in a taxi with you." That sounded a little too flamboyant, especially with a driver listening in. So he said nothing but "Huh!"

He explained to the driver the route to Grinden Hall, and they set forth.

Marie Louise had a dilemma of her own. Lady Clifton-Wyatt had had the last word, and it had been an invitation to Davidge to call on her. Worse yet, he had accepted it. Lady Clifton-Wyatt's purpose was, of course, to rob Marie Louise of this last friend. Perhaps the wretch had a sentimental interest in Davidge, too. She was a widow and a man-grabber; she still had a tyrannic beauty and a greed of conquest. Marie Louise was determined that Davidge should not fall into her clutches, but she could hardly exact a promise from him to stay away.

The taxi was crossing the aqueduct bridge before she could brave the point. She was brazen enough to say, "You'll accept Lady Clifton-Wyatt's invitation to tea, of course?"

"Oh, I suppose so," said Davidge. "No American woman

can resist a lord; so how could an American man resist a Lady?"

"Oh!"

This helpless syllable expressed another defeat for Marie Louise. When they reached the house she bade him good night without making any arrangement for a good morrow, though Davidge held her hand decidedly longer than ever before.

She stood on the portico and watched his cab drive off. She gazed toward Washington and did not see the dreamy constellation it made with the shaft of the Monument ghostly luminous as if with a phosphorescence of its own. She felt an outcast indeed. She imagined Polly hurrying back to ask questions that could not be dodged any longer. She had no right to defend herself offensively from the rightful demands of a friend and hostess. Besides, the laws of hospitality would not protect her from Polly's temper. Polly would have a perfect right to order her from the house. And she would, too, when she knew everything. It would be best to decamp before being asked to.

Marie Louise whirled and sped into the house, rang for the maid, and said:

"My trunks! Please have them brought down—or up, from wherever they are, will you?"

"Your trunks, miss!"

"And a taxicab. I shall have to leave at once."

"But—oh, I am sorry. Shall I help you pack?"

"Thank you, no—yes—no!"

The maid went out with eyes popping, wondering what earthquake had sent the guest home alone for such a headlong exit.

Things flew in the drowsy house, and Marie Louise's chamber looked like the show-room of a commercial traveler for a linen-house when Polly appeared at the door and gasped:

"What in the name of— I didn't know you were sick enough to be delirious!"

She came forward through an archipelago of clothes to where Marie Louise was bending over a trunk. Polly took an armload of things away from her and put them back in the highboy. As she set her arms akimbo and stood staring at Marie Louise with a lovable and loving insolence, she heard

the sound of a car rattling round the driveway, and her first words were:

"Who's coming here at this hour?"

"That's the taxi for me," Marie Louise explained.

Polly turned to the maid, "Go down and send it away—no, tell the driver to go to the asylum for a strait-jacket."

The maid smiled and left. Marie Louise was afraid to believe her own hopes.

"You don't mean you want me to stay, do you—not after what that woman said?"

"Do you imagine for a moment," returned Polly, "that I'd ever believe a word that cat could utter? Good Lord! if Lady Clifton-Wyatt told me it was raining and I could see it was, I'd know it wasn't and put down my umbrella."

Marie Louise rejoiced at the trust implied, but she could not make a fool of so loyal a friend. She spoke with difficulty:

"What if what she said was the truth, or, anyway, a kind of burlesque of it?"

"Marie Louise!" Polly gasped, and plounced into a chair. "Tell me the truth this minute, the true truth."

Marie Louise was perishing for a confidante. She had gone about as far without one as a normal woman can. She sat wondering how to begin, twirling her rings on her fingers. "Well, you see—you see—it is true that I'm not Sir Joseph's daughter. I was born in a little village—in America—Wakefield—out there in the Middle West. I ran away from home, and—"

She hesitated, blanched, blushed, skipped over the years she tried not to think of and managed never to speak of. She came down to:

"Well, anyway, at last I was in Berlin—on the stage—"

"You were an actress?" Polly gasped.

Marie Louise confessed, "Well, I'd hardly say that."

She told Polly what she had told Mr. Verrinder of the appearance of Sir Joseph and Lady Webling, of their thrill at her resemblance to their dead daughter, of their plea that she leave the stage and enter their family, of her new life, and the outbreak of the war.

Major Widdicombe pounded on the door and said: "Are you girls going to talk all night? I've got to get up at seven and save the country."

Polly cried to him, "Go away," and to Marie Louise, "Go on."

Marie Louise began again, but just as she reached the first suspicions of Sir Joseph's loyalty she remembered the oath she had plighted to Verrinder and stopped short.

"I forgot! I can't!"

Polly groaned: "Oh, my God! You're not going to stop there! I loathe serials."

Marie Louise shook her head. "If only I could tell you; but I just can't! That's all; I can't!"

Polly turned her eyes up in despair. "Well, I might as well go to bed, I suppose. But I sha'n't sleep a wink. Tell me one thing, though. You weren't really a German spy, were you?"

"No, no! Of course not! I loathe everything German."

"Well, let the rest rest, then. So long as Lady Clifton-Wyatt is a liar I can stand the strain. If you had been a spy, I suppose I'd have to shoot you or something; but so long as you're not, you don't budge out of this house. Is that understood?"

Marie Louise nodded with a pathetic gratitude, and Polly stamped a kiss on her brow like a notarial seal.

CHAPTER VIII

THE next morning's paper announced that spring had officially arrived and been recognized at the Capitol—a certain Senator had taken off his wig. Washington accepted this as the sure sign that the weather was warm. It would not be officially autumn till that wig fell back into place.

There were less formal indications: for instance, the annual flower-duel between the two terraces on Massachusetts Avenue. The famous Embassy Terrace forsythias began it, and flaunted little fringes of yellow glory. The slopes of the Louise Home replied by setting their magnolia-trees on fire with flowers like lamps, flowers that hurried out ahead of their own leaves and then broke and covered the ground with great petals of shattered porcelain. The Embassy Terrace put out lamps of its own closer to the ground, but more gorgeous—irises in a row of blue, blue footlights.

The Louise Home, where gentlewomen of better days, ambassadresses of an earlier régime, kept their state, had the last word, the word that could not be bettered, for it uttered wistaria, wistful lavender clusters weeping from the trellises in languorous grace.

Marie Louise, looking from her open window in Rosslyn, felt in the wind a sense of stroking fingers. The trees were brisk with hope. The river went its way in a more sparkling flow. The air blew from the very fountains of youth with a teasing blarney. She thought of Ross Davidge and smiled tenderly to remember his amiable earnestness. But she frowned to remember his engagement with Lady Clifton-Wyatt. She wondered what excuse she could invent to checkmate that woman.

Suddenly inspiration came to her. She remembered that she had forgotten to pay Davidge for the seat he surrendered her in the chair-car. She telephoned him at his hotel. He was out. She pursued him by wire travel till she found him in an office of the Shipping Board. He talked on the corner of

a busy man's desk. She heard the busy man say with a taunting voice, "A lady for you, Davidge."

She could hear the embarrassment in his voice. She was in for it now, and she felt silly when she explained why she bothered him. But she was stubborn, too. When he understood, he laughed with the constraint of a man bandying enforced gallantries on another man's telephone.

"I'd hate to be as honest as all that."

"It's not honesty," she persisted. "It's selfishness. I can't rest while the debt is on my mind."

He was perplexed. "I've got to see several men on the Shipping Board. There's a big fight on between the wooden-ship fellows and the steel-ship men, and I'm betwixt and between 'em. I won't have time to run out to see you."

"I shouldn't dream of asking you. I was coming in to town, anyway."

"Oh! Well, then—well—er—when can I meet you?"

"Whenever you say! The Willard at— When shall you be free?"

"Not before four and then only for half an hour."

"Four it is."

"Fine! Thank you ever so much. I'll buy me a lot of steel with all that money you owe me."

Marie Louise put up the receiver. People have got so used to the telephone that they can see by it. Marie Louise could visualize Davidge angry with embarrassment, confronting the important man whose office he had desecrated with this silly hammockese. She felt that she had made herself a nuisance and lost a trick. She had taken a deuce with her highest trump and had not captured the king.

Furthermore, to keep Davidge from meeting Lady Clifton-Wyatt would be only to-day's battle. There would still be to-morrows and the day-afters. Lady Clifton-Wyatt had declared herself openly hostile to Marie Louise, and would get her sooner or later. Flight from Washington would be the only safety.

But Marie Louise did not want to leave Washington. She loved Washington and the opportunities it offered a woman to do important work in the cosmopolitan whirl of its populace. But she could not live on at Polly Widdicombe's forever.

Marie Louise decided that her hour had struck. She must find a nook of her own. And she would have to live in it all by herself. Who was there to live with? She felt horribly deserted in life. She had looked at numerous houses and apartments from time to time. Apartments were costlier and fewer than houses. Since she was doomed to live alone, anyway, she might as well have a house. Her neighbors would more easily be kept aloof.

She sought a real-estate agent, Mr. Hailstorks, of the sort known as affable. But the dwellings he had to show were not even that. Places she had found not altogether odious before were rented now. Places that her heart went out to to-day proved to have been rented yesterday.

Finally she ran across a residence of a sort. She sighed to Mr. Hailstorks:

"Well, a carpenter made it—so let it pass for a house. I'll take it if it has a floor. I'm like Gelett Burgess: 'I don't so much care for a door, but this crawling around without touching the ground is getting to be quite a bore.'"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mr. Hailstorks, bewilderedly.

He unlocked the door of somebody's tenantless ex-home with its lonely furniture, and Marie Louise intruded, as one does, on the chairs, rugs, pictures, and vases that other people have been born with, have achieved, or have had thrust upon them. She wondered, as one does, what sort of beings they could have been that had selected such things to live among, and what excuse they had had for them.

Mr. Hailstorks had a surprise in store for her. He led her to the rear of the house and raised a shade. Instead of the expectable back yard, Marie Louise was startled to see a noble landscape leap into view. The house loomed over a precipitous descent into a great valley. A stream ran far below, and then the cliffs rose again opposite in a succession of uplifting terraces that reminded her somehow of Richmond Hill superbly built up above the silver Thames.

"Whatever is all that?" she cried.

"Rock Creek Park, ma'am," said Mr. Hailstorks, who had a sincere real-estately affection for parks, since they raised the price of adjoining property and made renting easier.

"And what's the price of all this grandeur?"

"Only three hundred a month," said Mr. Hailstorks.

"Only!" gasped Marie Louise.

"It will be four hundred in a week or two—yes ma'am," said Mr. Hailstorks.

So Marie Louise seized it before its price rose any farther.

She took a last look at Rock Creek Park, henceforth her private game-preserve. As she stared, an idea came to her. She needed one. The park, it occurred to her, was an excellent wilderness to get lost in—with Ross Davidge.

She was late to her meeting with Davidge—not unintentionally. He was waiting on the steps of the hotel, smoking, when she drove up in the car she had bought for her Motor Corps work.

He said what she hoped he would say:

"I didn't know you drove so well."

She quoted a popular phrase: "'You don't know the half of it, dearie.' Hop in, and I'll show you."

He thought of Lady Clifton-Wyatt, and Marie Louise knew he thought of her. But he was not hero or coward enough to tell a woman that he had an engagement with another woman. She pretended to have forgotten that he had told her, though she could think of little else. She whisked round the corner of I Street, or Eye Street, and thence up Sixteenth Street, fast and far.

She was amazed at her own audacity, and Davidge could not make her out. She had a scared look that puzzled him. She was really thinking that she was the most unconscionable kidnapper that ever ran off with some other body's child. He could hardly dun her for the money, and she had apparently forgotten it again.

They were well to the north when she said:

"Do you know Rock Creek Park?"

"No, I've never been in it."

"Would you like a glimpse? I think it's the prettiest park in the world."

She looked at her watch with that twist of the wrist now becoming almost universal and gasped:

"Oh, dear! I must turn back. But it's just about as short to go through the park. I mustn't make you late to Lady Clifton-Wyatt's tea."

He could find absolutely nothing to say to that except,

"It's mighty pretty along here." She turned into Blagdon Road and coasted down the long, many-turning dark glade. At the end she failed to steer to the south. The creek itself crossed the road. She drove the car straight through its lilting waters. There was exhilaration in the splashing charge across the ford. Then the road wound along the bank, curling and writhing with it gracefully through thick forests, over bridges and once more right through the bright flood. The creek scrambling among its piled-up boulders was too gay to suggest any amorous mood, and Marie Louise did not quite dare to drive the car down to the water's edge at any of the little green plateaus where picnics were being celebrated on the grass.

"I always lose my way in this park," she said. "I expect I'm lost now."

She began to regret Davidge's approaching absence, with a strange loneliness. He was becoming tenderly necessary to her. She sighed, hardly meaning to speak aloud, "Too bad you're going away so soon."

He was startled to find that his departure meant something to her. He spoke with an affectionate reassurance.

She stopped the car on a lofty plateau where several ladies and gentlemen were exercising their horses at hurdle-jumping. The élan of rush, plunge and recovery could not excite Marise now.

"I'll tell you what we'll do. The next time I come to Washington you drive me over to my shipyard and I'll show you the new boat and the new yard for the rest of the flock."

"That would be glorious. I should like to know something about ships."

"I can teach you all I know in a little while."

"You know all there is to know, don't you?"

"Lord help us, I should say not! I knew a little about the old methods, but they're all done away with. The fabricated ship is an absolute novelty. The old lines are gone, and the old methods. What few ship-builders we had are trying to forget what they know. Everybody is green. We had to find out for ourselves and pass it along to the foremen, and they hand it out to the laborers.

"The whole art is in a confusion. There is going to be a ghastly lot of mistakes and waste and scandal, but if we win

out there'll be such a cloudburst that the Germans will think it's raining ships. Niagara Falls will be nothing to the cascade of iron hulls going overboard. Von Tirpitz with his ruthless policy will be like the old woman who tried to sweep the tide back with a broom."

He grew so fervent in his vision of the new creation that he hardly saw the riders as they stormed the hurdles. Marie Louise took fire from his glow and forgot the petty motive that had impelled her to bring him to this place. Suddenly he realized how shamelessly eloquent he had been, and subsided with a slump.

"What a bore I am to tell all this to a woman!"

She rose at that. "The day has passed when a man can apologize for talking business to a woman. I've been in England for years, you know, and the women over there are doing all the men's work and getting better wages at it than the men ever did. After the war they'll never go back to their tatting and prattle. I'm going to your shipyard and have a look-in, but not the way a pink débutante follows a naval officer over a battle-ship, staring at him and not at the works. I'm going on business, and if I like ship-building, I may take it up."

"Great!" he laughed, and slapped her hand where it lay on the wheel. He apologized again for his roughness.

"I'll forgive anything except an apology," she said.

As she looked proudly down at the hand he had honored with a blow as with an accolade she saw by her watch that it was after six.

"Great Heavens! it's six and more!" she cried. "Lady Clifton-Wyatt will never forgive you—or me. I'll take you to her at once."

"Never mind Lady Clifton-Wyatt," he said. "But I've got another engagement for dinner—with a man, at half past six. I wish I hadn't."

They were drifting with the twilight into an elegiac mood, suffering the sweet sorrow of parting.

The gloaming steeped the dense woods, and the romance of sunset and gathering night saddened the business man's soul, but wakened a new and unsuspected woman in Marie Louise.

Her fierce imaginations were suddenly concerned with conquests of ambition, not of love. So fresh a realm was opened to her that she was herself renewed and restored to that boyish-

girlish estate of young womanhood before love has educated it to desire and the slaveries of desire. The Aphrodite that lurks in every woman had been put to flight by the Diana that is also there.

Davidge on the other hand had warmed toward Marie Louise suddenly, as he saw how ardent she could be. He had known her till now only in her dejected and terrified, distracted humors. Now he saw her on fire, and love began to blaze within him.

He felt his first impulse to throw an arm about her and draw her to his breast, but though the solitude was complete and the opportunity perfect, he saw that she was in no spirit for dalliance. There is no colder chaperon for a woman than a new ambition to accomplish something worth while.

As they drew up at the New Willard she was saying:

"Telephone the minute you come to town again. Good-by. I'm late to dinner."

She meant that she was late to life, late to a career.

Davidge stared at her in wonderment as she bent to throw the lever into first speed. She roughed it in her impatience, and the growl of the gear drowned the sound of another man's voice calling her name. This man ran toward her, but she did not notice him and got away before he could overtake her.

Davidge was jostled by him as he ran, and noted that he called Miss Webling "Mees Vapelink." The Teutonic intonation did not fall pleasantly on the American ear at that time. Washington was a forbidden city to Germanic men and soon would banish the enemy women, too.

The stranger took refuge on the sidewalk, and his curses were snarly with the Teutonic *r*. Davidge studied him and began to remember him. He had seen him with Marie Louise somewhere. Suddenly his mind, ransacking the filing-cabinet of his memory, turned up a picture of Nicky Easton at the side of Marie Louise at the dinner in Sir Joseph's home. He could not remember the name, but a man has a ready label for anybody he hates.

He began to worry now. Who was this spick foreigner who ran hooting after her? It was not like Davidge to be either curious or suspicious. But love was beginning its usual hocus-pocus with character and turning a tired business man into a restless swain.

Davidge resented Easton's claim on Marie Louise, whatever it was, as an invasion of some imagined property right of his own, or at least of some option he had secured somehow. He was alarmed at the Teutonic accent of the interloper. He began to take heed of how little he knew of Marie Louise, after all. He recalled Sir Joseph Webling's German accent. An icy fear chilled him.

His important business parley was conducted with an absent-mindedness that puzzled his host, the eminent ironmaster, Jacob Cruit, who had exchanged an income of a million a year and dictatorial powers for a governmental wage of one dollar per annum, no authority, no gratitude, and endless trouble.

Davidge's head was buzzing with thoughts in which Cruit had no part:

"Can she be one of those horrible women who have many lovers? Is she a woman of affairs? What is all this mystery about her? What was she so afraid of the night she would not stop at Mrs. Widdicombe's? Why was she so upset by the appearance of Lady Clifton-Wyatt? Why was she in such a hurry to get me away from Mrs. Prothero's dinner, and to keep me from keeping my engagement with Lady Clifton-Wyatt? Why so much German association?"

He thought of dozens of explanations, most of them wild, but none of them so wild as the truth—that Marie Louise was cowering under the accusation of being a German agent.

He resolved that he would forget Marie Louise, discharge her from the employment of his thoughts. Yet that night as he lay cooking in his hot berth he thought of Marie Louise instead of ships. None of his riot of thoughts was so fantastic as the fact that she was even then thinking of ships and not of him.

That night Marie Louise ransacked the library that the owner of Grinden Hall had left with the other furniture. Some member of the family had been a cadet at Annapolis, and his old text-books littered the shelves. Marie Louise selected and bore away an armload, not of novels, but of books whose very backs had repelled her before. They were the very latest romance to her now.

The authors of *An Elementary Manual for the Deviation of the Compass in Iron Ships*, *The Marine Steam-engine*, and

An Outline of Ship-building, Theoretical and Practical, could hardly have dreamed that their works would one night go upstairs in the embrace of a young woman's arms. The books would have struck a naval architect as quaintly old-fashioned, but to Marie Louise they were as full of news as the latest evening extra. The only one she could understand with ease was Captain Samuels's *From the Forecastle to the Cabin*, and she was thrilled by his account of the struggles of his youth, his mutinies, his champion of the Atlantic, the semi-clipper *Dreadnaught*, but most of all, by his glowing picture of the decay of American marine glory.

She read till she could sit up no longer. Then she undressed and dressed for sleep, snapped on the reading-lamp, and took up another book, Bowditch's *American Navigation*. It was the "Revised Edition of 1883," but it was fresh sensation to her. She lay prone like the reading Magdalen in the picture, her hair pouring down over her shoulders, her bosom pillowed on the volume beneath her eyes.

CHAPTER IX

PASSENGERS arriving at Washington in the early morning may keep their cubbyholes until seven, no later. By half past seven they must be off the car. Jake Nuddle was an ugly riser. He had always regarded the alarm-clock as the most hateful of all the inventions of capitalists to enslave the poor. Jake had strange ideas of capitalists, none stranger than that they are luxurious persons who sleep late and knock off work early.

Waking Jake was one of the most dangerous of his wife's prerogatives. On this morning, if he had been awaker he would have bitten off the black hand that reached into his berth and twitched the sheet at seven of a non-working day. The voice that murmured appealingly through the curtains, "S'em o'clock, please!" did not please Jake at all.

He cursed his annoying and nudging wife a few times heartily, then began to make his acutely unbeautiful toilet. In the same small wheeled hotel capitalists, statesmen, matrons, and misses were dressing in quarters just as strait. Jake and his wife had always got in each other's way, but never more cumbersomely than now. Jake found his wife's stockings when he sought his socks. Her corset-strings seemed to be everywhere. Whatever he laid hold of brought along her corset. He thrust his head and arms into something white and came out of it sputtering:

"That's your damned shimmy. Where's my damned shirt?"

Somehow they made it at last, got dressed and washed somehow and left the caravansary. Mrs. Nuddle carried the heavier baggage. They had breakfast at the lunch-counter; then they went out and looked at the Capitol. It inspired in Jake's heart no national reverence. He said to his awestruck wife:

"There's where that gang of robbers, the Congersmen, meet

and agree on their hold-ups. They're all the hirelings of the capitalists.

"They voted for this rotten war without consulting the people. They didn't dare consult 'em. They knew the people wasn't in favor of no such crime. But the Congersmen get their orders from Wall Street, and them brokers wanted the war because they owned so much stock that wouldn't be worth the paper it was printed on unless the United States joined the Allies and collected for 'em off Germany."

It was thus that Jake and his kind regarded the avalanche of norrific woe that German ambition spilled upon the world and kept rolling down from the mountain-tops of heaped-up munitions. It was thus that they contemplated the mangled villages of innocent Belgium, the slavery-drives in the French towns, the windrows of British dead, the increasing lust of conquest, which grew by what it fed on, till at last America, driven frantic by the endless carnage, took up belatedly the gigantic task of throwing back the avalanche across the mountain to the other side before it engulfed and ruined the world. While Europe agonized in torments unthinkable, immeasurable, and yet mysteriously endurable only because there was no escape visible, the Jake Nuddles, illiterate and literate, croaked their batrachian protest against capital, bewailed the lot of imaginary working-men, and belied the life of real working-men.

Staring at the Capitol, which means so much nobility to him who has the nobility to understand the dream that raised it, he burlesqued its ideals. Cruel, corrupt, lazy, and sloven of soul, he found there what he knew best because it was his own. Aping a sympathy he could not feel, he grew maudlin:

"So they drag our poor boys from their homes in droves and send 'em off to the slaughter-house in France—all for money! Anything to grind down the honest workman into the dust, no matter how many mothers' hearts they break!"

Jake was one of those who never express sympathy for anybody except in the course of a tirade against somebody else. He had small use for wives, mothers, or children except as clubs to pound rich men with. His wife, who knew him all too well, was not impressed by his eloquence. Her typical answer to his typical tirade was, "I wonder how on earth we're goin' to find Mamise."

Jake groaned at the anticlimax to his lofty flight, but he realized that the main business before the house was what his wife propounded.

He remembered seeing an Information Bureau sign in the station. He had learned from the newspaper in which he had seen Mamise's picture that she was visiting Major Widdicombe. He had written the name down on the tablets of his memory, and his first plan was to find Major Widdicombe. Jake had a sort of wolfish cunning in tracing people he wanted to meet. He could always find anybody who might lend him money. He had mysterious difficulties in tracing some one who could give him work.

He left his wife to simmer in the station while he set forth on a scouting expedition. After much travel he found at last the office of the Ordnance Department, in which Major Widdicombe toiled, and he appeared at length at Major Widdicombe's desk.

Jake was cautious. He would not state his purpose. He hardly dared to claim relationship with Miss Webling until he was positive that she was his sister-in-law. Noting Jake's evasiveness, the Major discreetly evaded the request for his guest's address. He would say no more than:

"Miss Webling is coming down to lunch with me at the—that is with my wife. I'll tell her you're looking for her; if she wants to meet you, I'll tell you, if you come back here."

"All right, mucher bliged," said Jake. Baffled and without further recourse, he left the Major's presence, since there seemed to be nothing else to do. But once outside, he felt that there had been something highly unsatisfactory about the parley. He decided to imitate Mary's little lamb and to hang about the building till the Major should appear. In an hour or two he was rewarded by seeing Widdicombe leave the door and step into an automobile. Jake heard him tell the driver, "The Shoreham."

Jake walked to the notel and saw Marie Louise seated at a table by a window. He recognized her by her picture and was duly triumphant. He was ready to advance and demand recognition. Then he realized that he could make no claim on her without his awful wife's corroboration. He took a street-car back to the station and found his nominal helpmeet sitting just where he had left her.

Abbie had bought no newspaper, book, or magazine to while away the time with. She was not impatient of idleness. It was luxury enough just not to be warshin' clo'es, cookin' vittles, or wrastlin' dishes. She took a dreamy content in studying the majesty of the architecture, but her interest in it was about that of a lizard basking on a fallen column in a Greek peristyle. It was warm and spacious and nobody disturbed her drowsy beatitude.

When Jake came and summoned her she rose like a rheumatic old housebound and obeyed her master's voice.

Jake gave her such a vote of confidence as was implied in letting her lug the luggage. It was cheaper for her to carry it than for him to store it in the parcel-room. It caused the fellow-passengers in the street-car acute inconvenience, but Jake was superior to public opinion of his wife. In such a homely guise did the fates approach Miss Webling.

CHAPTER X

THE best place for a view is in one's back yard; then it is one's own. If it is in the front yard, then the house is only part of the public's view.

In London Marie Louise had lived at Sir Joseph Webling's home, its gray, fog-stained, smoked-begrimed front flush with the pavement. But back of the house was a high-walled garden with a fountain that never played. There was a great rug of English-green grass, very green all winter and still greener all summer. At an appropriate spot was a tree; a tea-table sat under it; in blossom-time it sprinkled pink petals on the garden hats of the women; and on the grass they fell, to twist Tennyson, softlier than tired eyelids on tired eyes.

So Marie Louise adored her new home with its unpromising entrance and its superb surprise from the rear windows. When she broke the news to Polly Widdicombe, that she was leaving her, they had a good fight over it. Yet Polly could hardly insist that Marie Louise stay with her forever, especially when Marie Louise had a perfectly good home of her own.

Polly went along for a morning of reconstruction work. There were pictures, chairs, cushions, and knickknacks that simply had to be hidden away. The original tenants evidently had the theory that a bare space on a wall or a table was as indecent as on a person's person.

They had taken crude little chromos and boxed them in gaudy frames, many of whose atrocities were aggravated by panels of plush of a color that could hardly be described by any other name than fermented prune. Over the corner of these they had thrown "throws" or drapes of malicious magenta horribly figured in ruthless incompatibilities.

Chairs of unexplainable framework were upholstered with fabrics of studied delirium. Every mantel was an exhibit of models of what not to do. When Henry James said that Americans had no end of taste, but most of it was bad, he

must have based his conclusions on such a conglomerate as this.

Polly and Marie Louise found some of the furniture bad enough to be amusing. But they toted a vanload of it into closets and storerooms. Where the pictures came away they left staring spaces of unfaded wall-paper. Still, they were preferable to the pictures.

By noon the women were exhausted. They washed their dust-smutted hands and faces and exclaimed upon the black water they left. But the exercise had given them appetite, and when Marie Louise locked the front door she felt all the comfort of a householder. She had a home of her very own to lock up, and though she had roamed through pleasures and palaces, she agreed that, be it ever so horrible, there's no place like home.

She and Polly were early to their luncheon engagement with Major Widdicombe. Their appetites disputed the clock. Polly decided to telephone her husband for Heaven's sake to come at once to her rescue.

While Polly was telephoning Marie Louise sat waiting on a divan. Her muscles were so tired that she grew nearly as placidly animal as her sister in the Pennsylvania Station. She was as different in every other way as possible. Her life, her environment, her ambitions, had been completely alien to anything Mrs. Nuddle had known. She had been educated and evolved by entirely different joys and sorrows, fears and successes.

Mrs. Nuddle had been afraid that her husband would beat her again, or kill one of the children in his rage, or get himself sent to prison or to the chair; Mrs. Nuddle had been afraid that the children would be run over in the street, would pull a boilerful of boiling water over onto them, or steal, or go wrong in any of the myriad ways that children have of going wrong. Mrs. Nuddle's ecstasies were a job well done, a word of praise from a customer, a chance to sit down, an interval without pain or worry when her children were asleep, or when her husband was working and treating her as well as one treats an old horse.

Of such was the kingdom of Mrs. Nuddle.

Marie Louise had dwelt in a world no more and no less harrowing, but infinitely unlike. The two sisters were no

longer related to each other by any ties except blood kinship. Mrs. Nuddle was a good woman gone wrong, Marie Louise a goodish woman gone variously; Mrs. Nuddle a poor advertisement of a life spent in honest toil, early rising, early bedding, churchgoing, and rigid economy; Marie Louise a most attractive evidence of how much depends on a careful carriage, a cultivated taste in clothes, and an elegant acquaintance.

At last, after years of groping toward each other, the sisters were to be brought together. But there was to be an intervention. Even while Marie Louise sat relaxed in a fatigue that she would have called contentment trouble was stealing toward her.

The spider who came and sat beside this Miss Muffet was Nicky Easton. He frightened her, but he would not let her run away.

As he dropped to her side she rose with a gasp, but he pressed her back with a hasty grip on her arm and a mandatory prayer:

"Wait once, pleass."

The men who had shadowed Marie Louise had months before given her up as hopelessly correct. But guardian angels were still provided for Nicky Easton; and one of them, seeing this meeting, took Marie Louise back into the select coterie of the suspects.

There's no cure for your bodily aches and pains like terror. It lifts the paralytic from his bed, makes the lame scurry, and gives the blind eyes enough for running. Marie Louise's fatigue fell from her like a burden whose straps are slit.

When Nicky said: "I could not find you in New York. Now we are here we can have a little talkink," she stammered: "Not here! Not now!"

"Why not, pleass?"

"I have an engagement—a friend—she has just gone to telephone a moment."

"You are ashamed of me, then?"

She let him have it. "Yes!"

He winced at the slap in the face.

She went on: "Besides, she knows you. Her husband is an officer in the army. I can't talk to you here."

"Where, then, and when?"

"Any time—any place—but here."

"Any time is no time. You tell me, or I stay now."

"Come to—to my house."

"You have a howiss, then?"

"Yes. I just took it to-day. I shall be there this afternoon—at three, if you will go."

"Very goot. The address is—"

She gave it; he repeated it, mumbled, "At sree o'clock I am there," and glided away just as Polly returned.

They were eating a consommé madrilène when the Major arrived. He dutifully ate what his wife had selected for him, and listened amiably to what she had to tell him about her morning, though he was bursting to tell her about his. Polly made a vivid picture of Marie Louise's new home, ending with:

"Everything on God's earth in it except a piano and a book."

This reminded Marie Louise of the books she had read on ship-building, and she asked if she might borrow them. Polly made a woeful face at this.

"My dear! When a woman starts to reading up on a subject a man is interested in, she's lost—and so is he. Beware of it, my dear."

Tom demurred: "Go right on, Marie Louise, so that you can take an intelligent interest in what your husband is working on."

"My husband!" said Marie Louise. "Aren't you both a trifle premature?"

Polly went glibly on: "Don't listen to Tom, my dear. What does he know about what a man wants his wife to take an intelligent interest in? Once a woman knows about her husband's business, he's finished with her and ready for the next. Tom's been trying to tell me for ten years what he's working at, and I haven't the faintest idea yet. It always gives him something to hope for. When he comes home of evenings he can always say, 'Perhaps to-night's the night when she'll listen.' But once you listen intelligently and really understand, he's through with you, and he'll quit you for some pink-cheeked ignoramus who hasn't heard about it yet."

Marie Louise, being a woman, knew how to get her message

to another woman; the way seems to be to talk right through her talk. The acute creatures have ears to hear with and mouths to talk with, and they apparently find no difficulty in using both at the same time. Somewhere along about the middle of Polly's discourse Marie Louise began to answer it before it was finished. Why should she wait when she knew what was coming? So she said contemporaneously and covocally:

"But I'm not going to marry a ship-builder, my dear. Don't be absurd! I'm not planning to take an intelligent interest in Mr. Davidge's business. I'm planning to take an intelligent interest in my own. I'm going to be a ship-builder myself, and I want to learn the A B C's."

They finished that argument at the same time and went on together down the next stretch in a perfect team:

"Oh, well of course, if that's the case," asserted Polly, "then you're quite crazy—unless you're simply hunting for a new sensation. And on that score I'll admit that it sounds rather interesting. I may take a whack at it myself. I'm quite fed up on bandages and that sort of thing. Get me a job in the same factory or whatever they call it. Will you?"

"Mr. Davidge tells me," Marie Louise explained, "that women are needed in ship-building, and that anybody can learn. In fact, everybody has to, anyway; so I've got as good a chance as a man. I'm as strong as a horse. Fine! Come along, and we'll build a U-boat chaser together. Mr. Davidge would be delighted to have you, I'm sure."

This was arrant hubbub to the mere man who was not capable of carrying on a conversation except by the slow, primitive methods of Greek drama, strophe and antistrophe, one talking while the other listened, then *vice versa*.

So he had time to remember that he had something to remember, and to dig it up. He broke in on the dialogue:

"By the way, that reminds me, Marie Louise. There's a man in town looking for you."

"Looking for me!" Marie Louise gasped, alert as an antelope at once. "What was his name?"

"I can't seem to recall it. I'll have it in a minute. He

didn't impress me very favorably, so I didn't tell him you were living with us."

Polly turned on Tom: "Come along, you poor nut! I hate riddles, and so does Marie Louise."

"That's it!" Tom cried. "*Riddle—Nuddle*. His name is Nuddle. Do you know a man named Nuddle?"

The name conveyed nothing to Marie Louise except a suspicion that Mr. Verrinder had chosen some pseudonym.

"What was his nationality?" she asked. "English?"

"I should say not! He was as Amurrican as a piece of pungkin pie."

Marie Louise felt a little relieved, but still at sea. When Widdicombe asked what message he should take back her curiosity led her to brave her fate and know the worst:

"Tell him to come to my house at any time this afternoon —no, not before five. I have some shopping to do, and the servants to engage."

She did not ask Polly to go with ner, and Polly took the hint conveyed in Marie Louise's remark as they left the dining-room, "I've a little telephoning to do."

Polly went her way, and Marie Louise made a pretext of telephoning.

Major Widdicombe did not see Jake Nuddle as he went down the steps, for the reason that Jake saw him first and drew his wife aside. He wondered what had become of Marie Louise.

Jake and his wife hung about nonplussed for a few minutes, till Marie Louise came out. She had waited only to make sure that Tom and Polly got away. When she came down the steps she cast a casual glance at Jake and her sister, who came toward her eagerly. But she assumed that they were looking at some one else, for they meant nothing to her eyes.

She had indeed never seen this sister before. The sister who waddled toward her was not the sister she had left in Wakefield years before. That sister was young and lean and a maid. Marriage and hard work and children had swaddled this sister in bundles of strange flesh and drawn the face in new lines.

Marie Louise turned her back on her, but heard across her shoulder the poignant call:

"Mamise!"

That voice was the same. It had not lost its own peculiar cry, and it reverted the years and altered the scene like a magician's "Abracadabra!"

Marie Louise swung round just in time to receive the full brunt of her sister's charge. The repeated name identified the strange-looking matron as the girl grown old, and Marie Louise gathered her into her arms with a fierce homesickness. Her loneliness had found what it needed. She had kinfolk now, and she sobbed: "Abbie darling! My darling Abbie!" while Abbie wept: "Mamise! Oh, my poor little Mamise!"

A cluster of cab-drivers wondered what it was all about, but Jake Nuddle felt triumphant. Marie Louise looked good to him as he looked her over, and for the nonce he was content to have the slim, round fashionable creature enveloped in his wife's arms for a sister-in-law.

Abbie, a little homelier than ever with her face blubbery and tear-drenched, turned to introduce what she had drawn in the matrimonial lottery.

"Mamise!" she said. "I want you should meet my husbin'."

"I'm delighted!" said Mamise, before she saw her sister's fate. She was thorough-trained if not thorough-born, and she took the shock without reeling.

Jake's hand was not as rough so it ought to have been, and his cordiality was sincere as he growled:

"Pleaster meecher, Mamise."

He was ready already with her first name, but she had nothing to call him by. It never occurred to Abbie that her sister would not instinctively know a name so familiar to Mrs. Nuddle as Mr. Nuddle, and it was a long while before Marie Louise managed to pick it up and piece it together.

Her embarrassment at meeting Jake was complete. She asked:

"Where are you living—here in Washington?"

"Laws, no!" said Abbie; and that reminded her of the bundles she had dropped at the sight of Mamise. They had played havoc with the sidewalk traffic, but she hurried to regain them.

Jake could be the gentleman when there was somebody looking who counted. So he checked his wife with amazement at the preposterousness of her carrying bundles while Sir Walter Raleigh was at hand. He picked them up and brought

them to Marie Louise's feet, disgusted at the stupid amazement of his wife, who did not have sense enough to conceal it. Marie Louise was growing alarmed at the perfect plebeiance of her kith. She was unutterably ashamed of herself for noticing such things, but the eye is not to blame for what it can't help seeing, nor the ear for what is forced upon it. She had a feeling that the first thing to do was to get her sister in out of the rain of glances from the passers-by.

"You must come to me at once," she said. "I've just taken a house. I've got no servants in yet, and you'll have to put up with it as it is."

Abbie gasped at the "servants." She noted the authority with which Marie Louise beckoned a chauffeur and pointed to the bundles, which he hastened to seize.

Abbie was overawed by the grandeur of her first automobile and showed it on her face. She saw many palaces on the way and expected Marie Louise to stop at any of them. When the car drew up at Marie Louise's home Abbie was bitterly disappointed; but when she got inside she found her dream of paradise. Marie Louise was distressed at Abbie's loud praise of the general effect and her unfailing instinct for picking out the worst things on the walls or the floors. This distress caused a counter-distress of self-rebuke.

Jake was on his dignity at first, but finally he unbent enough to take off his coat, hang it over a chair, and stretch himself out on a divan whose ulterior maroon did not disturb his repose in the least.

"This is what I call something like," he said; and then, "And now, Mamise, set in and tell us all about yourself."

This was the last thing Mamise wanted to do, and she evaded with a plea:

"I can wait. I want to hear all about you, Abbie darling. How are you, and how long have you been married, and where do you live?"

"Goin' on eight years come next October, and we got three childern. I been right poorly lately. Don't seem to take as much interest in worshin' as I useter."

"Washing!" Marie Louise exclaimed. "You don't wash, do you? That is, I mean to say—professionally?"

"Yes, I worsh. Do right smart of work, too."

Marie Louise was overwhelmed. She had a hundred

thousand dollars, and her sister was a—washerwoman! It was intolerable. She glanced at Jake.

"But Mr.—your husband—"

"Oh, Jake, he works—off and on. But he ain't got what you might call a hankerin' for it. He can take work or let it alone. I can't say as much for him when it comes to licker. Fact is, some the women say, 'Why, Mrs. Nuddle, how do you ever—'"

"Your name isn't—it isn't Nuddle, is it?" Marie Louise broke in.

"Sure it is. What did you think it was?"

So the sleeping brother-in-law was the mysterious inquirer. That solved one of her day's puzzles and solved it very tamely. So many of life's mysteries, like so many of fiction's, peter out at the end. They don't sustain.

Marie Louise still belonged to the obsolescent generation that believed it a husband's duty to support his wife by his own labor. The thought of her sister supporting a worthless husband by her own toil was odious. The first task was to get Jake to work. It was only natural that she should think of her own new mania.

She spoke so eagerly that she woke Jake when she said: "I have it! Why doesn't your husband go in for shipbuilding?"

Marie Louise told him about Davidge and what Davidge had said of the need of men. She was sure that she could get him a splendid job, and that Mr. Davidge would do anything for her.

Jake was about to rebuke such impudence as it deserved, but a thought struck him, and he chewed it over. Among the gang of idealists he consorted with, or at least salooned with, the dearest ambition of all was to turn America's dream of a vast fleet of ships into a nightmare of failure. In order to secure "just recognition" for the workman they would cause him to be recognized as both a loafer and a traitor—that was their ideal of labor.

As Marie Louise with unwitting enthusiasm rhapsodized over the shipyard Jake's interest kindled. To get into a shipyard just growing, and spread his doctrines among the men as they came in, to bring off strikes and to play tricks with machinery everywhere, to wreck launching-ways so that hulls

that escaped all other attacks would crack through and stick—it was a Golconda of opportunities for this modern conquistador. He could hardly keep his face straight till he heard Marie Louise out. He fooled her entirely with his ardor; and when he asked, "Do you think your gentleman friend, this man Davidge, would really give me a job?" she cried, with more enthusiasm than tact:

"I know he would. He'd give anybody a job. Besides, I'm going to take one myself. And, Abbie honey, what would you say to your becoming a ship-builder, too? It would be immensely easier and pleasanter than washing clothes."

Before Abbie could recover the breath she lost at the picture of herself as a builder of ships the door-bell rang. Abbie peeked and whispered:

"It's a man."

"Do you suppose it's that feller Davidge?" said Jake.

"No, it's—it's—somebody else," said Marie Louise, who knew who it was without looking.

She was at her wit's end now. Nicky Easton was at the door, and a sister and a brother-in-law whose existence she had not suspected were in the parlor.

CHAPTER XI

IF anything is anybody's very own, it is surely his past, or hers—particularly hers. But Nicky Easton was bringing one of the most wretched chapters of Marie Louise's past to her very door. She did not want to reopen it, especially not before her new-found family. One likes to have a few illusions left for these reunions. So she said:

"Abbie darling, would you forgive me if I saw this—person alone? Besides, you'll be wanting to get settled in your room, if Mr.—Ja—your husband doesn't mind taking your things up."

Abbie had not been used to taking dismissals graciously. She had never been to court and been permitted to retire. Besides, people who know how to take an eviction gracefully usually know enough to get out before they are put out. But Abbie had to be pushed, and she went, heartbroken, disgraced, resentful. Jake sulked after her. They moved like a couple of old flea-bitten mongrels spoken to sharply.

And of course they stole back to the head of the stairs and listened.

Nicky had his face made up for a butler, or at least a maid. When he saw Marie Louise he had to undo his features, change his opening oration, and begin all over again.

"It is zhoo yourself, then," he said.

"Yes. Come in, do. I have no servants yet."

"Ah!" he cooed, encouraged at once.

She squelched his hopes. "My sister and her husband are here, however."

This astounded him so that he spoke in two languages at once: "Your schwister! Since how long do you have a sester? And where did you get?"

"I have always had her. but we haven't seen each other for years."

He gasped, "*Was Sie nicht sagen!*"

"And if you wouldn't mind not talking German—"

"*Recht so.* Excuse. Do I come in—no?"

She stepped back, and he went into the drawing-room. He smiled at what he saw, and was polite, if cynical.

"You rent foornished?"

"Yes."

He waved her to a chair so that he might sit down.

"*Was giebt's neues*—er—what is the noose?"

"I have none. What is yours?"

"You mean you do not wish to tell. If I should commence once, I should never stop. But we are both alife yet. That is always somethink. I was never so nearly not."

Marie Louise could not withhold the protest:

"You saved yourself by betraying your friends."

"Well, I telled—I told only what the English knew already. If they let me go for it, it was no use to kill everybody, should I?"

He was rather miserable about it, for he could see that she despised him more for being an informer than for having something to inform. He pleaded in extenuation:

"But I shall show how usefool I can be to my country. Those English shall be sorry to let me go, and my people glad. And so shall you."

She studied him, and dreaded him, loathing his claim on her, longing to order him never to speak again to her, yet strangely interested in his future power for evil. The thought occurred to her that if she could learn his new schemes she might thwart them. That would be some atonement for what she had not prevented before. This inspiration brightened her so suddenly and gave such an eagerness to her manner that he saw the light and grew suspicious—a spy has to be, for he carries a weapon that has only one cartridge in it.

Marie Louise waited for him to explain his purpose till the suspense began to show; then she said, bluntly:

"What mischief are you up to now?"

"Mitschief—me?" he asked, all innocently.

"You said you wanted to see me."

"I always want to see you. You interest—my eyes—my heart—"

"Please don't." She said it with the effect of slamming a door.

She looked him full in the eyes angrily, then remembered her curiosity. He saw her gaze waver with a double motive.

It is strange how people can fence with their glances, as if they were emanations from the eyes instead of mere reflections of light back and forth. But however it is managed, this man and this woman played their stares like two foils feeling for an opening. At length he surrendered and resolved to appeal:

"How do you feel about—about us?"

"Who are us?"

"We Germans."

"We are not Germans. I'm American."

"Then England is your greater enemy than Germany."

She wanted to smile at that, but she said:

"Perhaps."

He pleaded for his cause. "America ought not to have joined the war against the *Vaterland*. It is only a few Americans—bankers who lended money to England—who wish to fight us."

Up-stairs Jake's heart bounded. Here was a fellow-spirit. He listened for Marie Louise's response; he caught the doubt in her tone. She could not stomach such an absurdity:

"Bosh!" she said.

It sounded like "Boche!" And Nicky flushed.

"You have been in this Washington town too long. I think I shall go now."

Marie Louise made no objection. She had not found out what he was up to, but she was sick of duplicity, sick of the sight of him and all he stood for. She did not even ask him to come again. She went to the door with him and stood there a moment, long enough for the man who was shadowing Nicky to identify her. She watched Nicky go and hoped that she had seen the last of him. But up-stairs the great heart of Jake Nuddle was seething with excitement. He ran to the front window, caught a glimpse of Nicky, and hurried back down the stairs.

Abbie called out, "Where you goin'?"

Jake did not answer such a meddlesome question, but he said to Marie Louise, as he brushed past her on the stairs:

"I'm going to the drug-store to git me some cigars."

Nicky paused on the curb, looking for a cab. He had dismissed his own, hoping to spend a long while with Marie

Louise. He saw that he was not likely to pick up a cab in such a side-street, and so he walked on briskly.

He was furious with Marie Louise. He had had hopes of her, and she had fooled him. These Americans were no longer dependable.

And then he heard footsteps on the walk, quick footsteps that spelled hurry. Nicky drew aside to let the speeder pass; but instead he heard a constabular "Hay!" and his shoulder-blades winced.

It was only Jake Nuddle. Jake had no newspaper to sell, but he had an idea for a collaboration which would bring him some of that easy money the Germans were squandering like drunken sailors.

"You was just talkin' to my sister-in-law," said Jake.

"Ah, you are then the brother of Marie Louise?"

"Yep, and I couldn't help hearin' a little of what passed between you."

Jake's slyness had a detective-like air in Nicky's anxious eyes. He warned himself to be on guard. Jake said:

"I'm for Germany unanimous. I think it's a rotten shame for America to go into this war. And some of us Americans are sayin' we won't stand for it. We don't own no Congersmen; we're only the protelarriat, as the feller says; but we're goin' to put this country on the bum, and that's what old Kaiser Bill wants we should do, or I miss my guess, hay?"

Nicky was cautious:

"How do you propose to help the All Highest?"

"Sabotodge."

"You interest me," said Nicky.

They had come to one of the circles that moon the plan of Washington. Nicky motioned Jake to a bench, where they could command the approach and be, like good children, seen and not heard. Jake outlined his plan.

When Nicky Easton had rung Marie Louise's bell he had not imagined how much help Marie Louise would render him in giving him the precious privilege of meeting her unprepossessing brother-in-law; nor had she dreamed what peril she was preparing for Davidge in planning to secure for him and his shipyard the services of this same Jake, as lazy and as amiable as any side-winder rattlesnake that ever basked in the sunlit sand.

BOOK IV

AT THE SHIPYARD

There was something hallowed and awesome about it all. It had a cathedral majesty.

CHAPTER I

DAVIDGE despised a man who broke his contracts. He broke one with himself and despised himself. He broke his contract to ignore the existence of Marie Louise. The next time he came to Washington he sought her out. He called up the Widdicombe home and learned that she had moved. She had no telephone yet, for it took a vast amount of time to get any but a governmental telephone installed. So he noted her address, and after some hesitation decided to call. If she did not want to see him, her butler could tell him that she was out.

He called. Marie Louise had tried in vain to get in servants who would stay. Abbie talked to them familiarly—and so did Jake. The virtuous ones left because of Jake, and the others left because of Abbie.

So Abbie went to the door when Davidge called. He supposed that the butler was having a day off and the cook was answering the bell. He offered his card to Abbie.

She wiped her hand on her apron and took it, then handed it back to him, saying:

"You'll have to read it. I ain't my specs."

Davidge said, "Please ask Miss Webling if she can see Mr. Davidge."

"You're not Mr. Davidge!" Abbie gasped, remembering the importance Marie Louise gave him.

"Yes," said Davidge, with proper modesty.

"Well, I want to know!"

Abbie wiped her hand again and thrust it forward, seizing his questioning fingers in a practised clench, and saying, "Come right on in and seddown." She haled the befuddled Davidge to a chair and regarded him with beaming eyes. He regarded her with the eyes of astonishment—and the ears, too, for the amazing servant, forever wiping her hands, went to the stairs and shrieked:

"Mamee-eese! Oh, Ma-mee-uz! Mist' Davidge is shere."

Poor Mamise! She had to come down upon such a scene, and without having had any chance to break the news that she had a sister she had to introduce the sister. She had no chance to explain her till a fortunate whiff of burning pastry led Abbie to groan, "My Lord, them pies!" and flee.

If ever Marie Louise had been guilty of snobbery, she was doing penance for it now. She was too loyal to what her family ought to have been and was not to apologize for Abbie, but she suffered in a social purgatory.

Worse yet, she had to ask Davidge to give her brother-in-law a job. And Davidge said he would. He said it before he saw Jake. And when he saw him, though he did not like him, he did not guess what treachery the fellow planned. He invited him to come to the shipyard—by train.

He invited Mamise to ride thither in her own car the next day to see his laboratory for ships, never dreaming that the German menace was already planning its destruction.

Not only in cheap plays and farces do people continue in perplexities that one question and one answer would put an end to. In real life we incessantly dread to ask the answers to conundrums that we cannot solve, and persist in misery for lack of a little frankness.

For many a smiling mile, on the morrow, Davidge rode in a torment. So stout a man, to be fretted by so little a matter! Yet he was unable to bring himself to the point of solving his curiosity. The car had covered forty miles, perhaps, while his thoughts ran back and forth, lacing the road like a dog accompanying a carriage. A mental speedometer would have run up a hundred miles before he made the plunge and popped the subject.

"Mamise is an unusual name," he remarked.

Marie Louise was pleasantly startled by the realization that his long silence had been devoted to her.

"Like it?" she asked.

"You bet." The youthfulness of this embarrassed him and made her laugh. He grew solemn for about eleven hundred yards of road that went up and down and up and down in huge billows. Then he broke out again:

"It's an unusual name."

She laughed patiently. "So I've heard."

The road shot up a swirling hill into an old, cool grove.

"I only knew one other—er—Mamise."

This sobered her. It was unpleasant not to be unique. The chill woods seemed to be rather glum about it, too. The road abandoned them and flung into a sun-bathed plain.

"Really? You really knew another—er—Mamise?"

"Yes. Years ago."

"Was she nice?"

"Very."

"Oh!" She was sorry about that, too. The road slipped across a loose-planked, bone-racking bridge. With some jealousy she asked, "What was she like?"

"You."

"That's odd." A little shabby, topply-tombed graveyard glided by, reverting to oblivion. "Tell me about her."

A big motor charged past so fast that the passengers were only blurs, a grim chauffeur-effect with blobs of fat woman-kind trailing snapping veils. The car trailed a long streamer of dust that tasted of the road. When this was penetrated they entered upon a stretch of pleasant travel for eyes and wheels, on a long, long channel through a fruitful prairie, a very allegory of placid opulence.

"It was funny," said Davidge. "I was younger than I am. I went to a show one night. A musical team played that everlasting 'Poet and Peasant' on the xylophones. They played nearly everything on nearly everything—same old stuff, accordions, horns, bells; same old jokes by the same fool clown and the solemn dubs. But they had a girl with 'em—a young thing. She didn't play very well. She had a way with her, though—seemed kind of disgusted with life and the rest of the troupe and the audience. And she had a right to be disgusted, for she was as pretty as—I don't know what. She was just beautiful—slim and limber and long—what you might imagine a nymph would look like if she got loose in a music-hall.

"I was crazy about her. If I could ever have written a poem about anybody, it would have been about her. She struck me as something sort of—well, divine. She wore the usual, and not much of it—low neck, bare arms, and—tights. But I kind of revered her; she was so dog-on pretty.

"When the drop fell on that act I was lost. I was an orphan for true. I couldn't rest till I saw the manager and asked him to take me back and introduce me to her. He gave me a nasty grin and said he didn't run that kind of a theater, and I said I'd knock his face off if he thought I thought he did. Well, he gave in finally and took me back. I fell down the side-aisle steps and sprawled along the back of the boxes and stumbled up the steps to the stage.

"And then I met Mamise—that was her name on the program—Mamise. She was pretty and young as ever, but she wasn't a nymph any longer. She was just a young, painted thing, a sulky, disgusted girl. And she was feeding a big monkey—a chimpanzee or something. It was sitting on a bicycle and smoking a cigar—getting ready to go on the stage.

"It was so human and so unhuman and so ugly, and she was so graceful, that it seemed like a sort of satire on humanity. The manager said, 'Say, Mamise, this gentleman here wants to pays his respecks.' She looked up in a sullen way, and the chimpanzee showed his teeth at me, and I mumbled something about expecting to see the name Mamise up in the big electric lights.

"She gave me a look that showed she thought I was a darned fool, and I agreed with her then—and since. She said, 'Much obliged' in a contemptuous contralto and—and turned to the other monkey.

"The interview was finished. I backed over a scene-prop, knocked down a stand of Indian-clubs, and got out into the alley. I was mad at her at first, but afterward I always respected her for snubbing me. I never saw her again, never saw her name again. As for the big electric lights, I was a punk prophet. But her name has stood out in electric lights in my—my memory. I suppose she left the stage soon after. She may be dead now.

"It hurt me a lot to have her wither me with that one big, slow glance of hers, but I was glad of it afterward. It made me feel more comfortable about her. If she had welcomed every stranger that came along she—well, as she didn't, she must have been a good girl, don't you suppose?"

The road still pierced the golden scene, a monotony of plenty, an endless-seeming treasure of sheaves of wheat and

stacks of corn, with pumpkins of yellow metal and twisted ingots of squash; but an autumnal sorrow clouded the landscape for Marie Louise.

"What do you call a good girl?" she asked.

"That's a hard question to answer nowadays."

"Why nowadays?"

"Oh, because our ideas of good are so much more merciful and our ideas of girls are so much more—complicated. Anyway, as the fellow said, that's my story. And now you know all about Mamise that I know. Can you forgive her for wearing your name?"

"I could forgive that Mamise anything," she sighed. "But this Mamise I can't forgive at all."

This puzzled him. "I don't quite get that."

She let him simmer in his own perplexity through a furlong of what helpless writers call "a shady dell"; its tenderness won from him a timid confession.

"You reminded me of her when I first met you. You are as different as can be, and yet somehow you remind me of each other."

"Somehow we are eacn other."

He leaned forward and stared at her, and she spared him a hasty glance from the road. She was blushing.

He was so childishly happy that he nearly said, "It's a small world, after all." He nearly swung to the other extreme. "Well, I'll be—" He settled like a dying pendulum on, "Well—well!" They both laughed, and he put out his hand. "Pleased to meet you again."

She let go the wheel and pressed his hand an instant.

The plateau was ended, and the road went overboard in a long, steep cascade. She pushed out the clutch and coasted. The whir of the engine stopped. The car sailed softly.

He was eager for news of the years between then and now. It was so wonderful that the surly young beginner in vaudeville should have evolved into this orchid of the *salons*. He was interested in the working of such social machinery. He urged:

"Tell me all about yourself."

"No, thanks."

"But what happened to you after I saw you? You don't remember me, of course."

"I remember the monkey."

They both laughed at the unconscious brutality of this. He turned solemn and asked:

"You mean that so many men came back to call on you?"

"No, not so many—too many, but not many. But—well, the monkey was more unusual, I suppose. He traveled with us several weeks. He was very jealous. He had a fight with a big trained dog that I petted once. They nearly killed each other before they could be separated. And such noises as they made! I can hear them yet. The manager of the monkey wanted to marry me. I was unhappy with my team, but I hated that man—he was such a cruel beast with the monkey that supported him. He'd have beaten me, too, I suppose, and made me support him."

Davidge sighed with relief as if her escape had been just a moment before instead of years ago.

"Lord! I'm glad you didn't marry him! But tell me what did happen after I saw you."

The road led them into a sizable town, street-car tracks, bad pavements, stupid shops, workmen's little homes in rows like chicken-houses, then better streets, better homes, business blocks well paved, a hotel, a post-office, a Carnegie library, a gawky Civil War statue, then poorer shops, rickety pavements, shanties, and the country again.

Davidge noted that she had not answered his question. He repeated it:

"What happened after you and the monkey-trainer parted?"

"Oh, years later I was in Berlin with a team called the Musical Mokes, and Sir Joseph and Lady Webling saw me and thought I looked like their daughter, and they adopted me—that's all."

She had grown a bit weary of her autobiography. Abbie had made her tell it over and over, but had tried in vain to find out what went on between her stage-beginnings and her last appearance in Berlin.

Davidge was fascinated by her careless summary of such great events; for to one in love, all biography of the beloved becomes important history. But having seen her as a member of Sir Joseph's household, he was more interested in the interregnum.

"But between your reaching Berlin and the time I saw you what happened?"

"That's my business."

She saw him wince at the abrupt discourtesy of this. She apologized:

"I don't mean to be rude, but—well, it wouldn't interest you."

"Oh yes, it would. Don't tell me if you don't want to, but—"

"But—"

"Oh, nothing!"

"You mean you'll think that if I don't tell you it's because I'm ashamed to."

"Oh no, not at all."

"Oh yes, at all. Well, what if I were?"

"I can't imagine your having done anything to be ashamed of."

"O Lord! Am I as stupid as that comes to?"

"No! But I mean, you couldn't have done anything to be really ashamed of."

"That's what I mean. I've done numberless things I'd give my right arm not to have done."

"I mean really wicked things."

"Such as—"

"Oh—well, I mean being bad."

"Woman-bad or man-bad?"

"Bad for a woman."

"So what's bad for one is not bad for another."

"Well, not exactly, but there is a difference."

"If I told you that I had been very, very wicked in those mysterious years, would it seem important to you?"

"Of course! Horribly! It couldn't help it, if a man cared much for a woman."

"And if a woman cared a lot for a man, ought it to make a difference what he had done before he met her?"

"Well, of course—but that's different."

"Why?"

"Oh, because it is."

"Men say 'Because!' too, I see."

"It's just shorthand with us. It means you know it so well there's no need of explaining."

"Oh! Well, if you—I say, *if* you were very much in love with me—"

"Which I—"

"Don't be odiously polite. I'm arguing, not fishing. If you were deeply in love with me, would it make a good deal of difference to you if several years ago I had been—oh, loose?"

"It would break my heart."

Marie Louise liked him the better for this, but she held to her argument.

"All right. Now, still supposing that we loved each other, ought I to inquire of you if the man of my possible choice had been perfectly—well, spotless, all that time? Ought I expect that he was saving himself up for me, feeling himself engaged to me, you might say, long before he met me, and keeping perfectly true to his future fiancée—ought I to expect that?"

He flushed a little as he mumbled:

"Hardly!"

She laughed a trifle bitterly:

"So we're there already?"

"Where?"

"At the double standard. What's crime for the goose is pastime for the gander."

He did not intend to give up man's ancient prerogative.

"Well, it's better to have almost any standard than none, isn't it?"

"I wonder."

"The single standard is better than the sixteen to one—silver for men and gold for women."

"Perhaps! But you men seem to believe in a sixteen to none. Mind you, I'm not saying I've been bad."

"I knew you couldn't have been."

"Oh yes, I could have been—I'm not saying I wasn't. I'm not saying anything at all. I'm saying that it's nobody's business but my own."

"Even your future husband has no right to know?"

"None whatever. He has the least right of all, and he'd better not try to find out."

"You women are changing things!"

"We have to, if we're going to live among men. When you're in Rome—"

"You're going to turn the world upside down, I suppose?"

"We've always done that more or less, and nobody ever could stop us, from the Garden of Eden on. In the future, one thing is sure: a lot of women will go wrong, as the saying is, under the new conditions, with liberty and their own money and all. But, good Lord! millions of women went wrong in the old days! The first books of the Bible tell about all the kinds of wickedness that we know to-day. Somebody complained that with all our modern science we hadn't invented one new deadly sin. We go on using the same old seven—well, indecencies. It will be the same with women. It's bound to be. You can't keep women unfree. You've simply got to let them loose. The old ways were hideous; and it's dishonest and vicious to pretend that people used to be better than they were, just as an argument in favor of slavery, for fear they will be worse than the imaginary woman they put up for an argument. I fancy women were just about as good and just about as bad in old Turkey, in the jails they call harems, as they are in a three-ringed circus to-day.

"When the old-fashioned woman went wrong she lied or cried or committed suicide or took to the streets or went on with her social success, as the case might be. She'll go on doing much the same—just as men do. Some men repent, some cheat, some kill themselves; others go right along about their business, whether it's in a bank, a church, a factory, a city or a village or anywhere.

"But in the new marriage—for marriage is really changing, though the marrying people are the same old folks—in the new marriage a man must do what a woman has had to do all along: take the partner for better or worse and no questions asked."

He humored her heresy because he found it too insane to reason with. "In other words, we'll take our women *as is*."

"That's the expression—*as is*. A man will take his sweetheart 'as is' or leave her. And whichever he does, as you always say, oh, she'll get along somehow."

"The old-fashioned home goes overboard, then?"

"That depends on what you mean by the old-fashioned home. I had one, and it could well be spared. There were all kinds of homes in old times and the Middle Ages and nowadays, and there'll be all kinds forever. But we're wrangling

like a pair of lovers instead of getting along beautifully like a pair of casual acquaintances."

"Aren't we going to be more than that?"

"I hope not. I want a place on your pay-roll; I'm not asking for a job as your wife."

"You can have it."

"Thanks, but I have another engagement. When I have made my way in the world and can support you in the style you're accustomed to, I may come and ask for your hand."

Her flippancy irked him worse than her appalling ideas, but she grew more desirable as she grew more infuriating, for the love-game has some resemblances to the fascinating-sickening game of golf. She did not often argue abstrusely, and she was already fagged out mentally. She broke off the debate.

"Now let's think of something else, if you don't mind."

They talked of everything else, but his soul was chiefly engaged in alternating vows to give her up and vows to make her his own in spite of herself; and he kept on trying to guess the conundrum she posed him in refusing to enlighten him as to those unmentionable years between his first sight of her and his second.

In making love, as in other popular forms of fiction, the element of mystery is an invaluable adjunct to the property value. He was still pondering her and wondering what she was pondering when they reached the town where his shipyard lay.

CHAPTER II

FROM a hilltop Marie Louise saw below her in panorama an ugly mess of land and riverscape—a large steel shed, a bewilderment of scaffolding, then a far stretch of muddy flats spotted with flies that were probably human beings, among a litter of timber, of girders, of machine-shanties, of railroad tracks, all spread out along a dirty water.

A high wire fence surrounded what seemed to need no protection. In the neighborhood were numbers of workmen's huts—some finished, and long rows of them in building, as much alike and as graceful as a pan of raw biscuits.

She saw it all as it was, with a stranger's eyes. Davidge saw it with the eyes a father sees a son through, blind to evident faults, vividly accepting future possibilities as realities.

Davidge said, with repressed pride:

"Well, thar she blows!"

"What?"

"My shipyard!" This with depressed pride.

"Oh, rilly! So it is! How wonderful!" This with forced enthusiasm.

"You don't like it," he groaned.

"I'm crazy about it."

"If you could have seen it when it was only marsh and weeds and mud-holes and sluices you'd appreciate what we've reclaimed and the work that has been done."

The motor pitched down a badly bruised road.

"Where's the ship that's nearly done—your mother's ship?"

"Behind the shed, in among all that scaffolding."

"Don't tell me there's a ship in there!"

"Yep, and she's just bursting to come out."

They entered the yard, past a guardian who looked as if a bottle of beer would buy him, and a breath strong enough to blow off the froth would blow him over.

Within a great cage of falsework Marie Louise could see the

ship that Davidge had dedicated to his mother. But he did not believe Marie Louise ready to understand it.

"Let's begin at the beginning," he said. "See those railroad tracks over there? Well, that's where the timber comes from the forests and the steel from the mills. Now we'll see what happens to 'em in the shop."

He took her into the shed and showed her the traveling-cranes that could pick up a locomotive between their long fingers and carry it across the long room like a captured beetle.

"Up-stairs is the mold-loft. It's our dressmaking-shop. We lay down the design on the floor, and mark out every piece of the ship in exact size, and then make templates of wood to match—those are the patterns. It's something like making a gown, I suppose."

"I see," said Marie Louise. "Then you fit the dress together out in the yard."

"Exactly," said Davidge. "You've mastered the whole thing already. It's a long climb up there. Will you try it?"

"Later, perhaps. I want to see these delightful what-you-may-call-'ems first."

She watched the men at work, each group about its own machine, like priests at their various altars. Davidge explained to her the cruncher that manicured thick plates of steel sheets as if they were finger-nails, or beveled their edges; the puncher that needled rivet-holes through them as if they were silk, the ingenious Lysholm tables with rollers for tops.

Marie Louise was like a child in a wholesale toy-shop, understanding nothing, ecstatic over everything, forbidden to touch anything. In her ignorance of technical matters, the simplest device was miraculous. The whole place was a vast laboratory of mysteries and magic.

There was a something hallowed and awesome about it all. It had a cathedral grandeur, even though it was a temple builded with hands for the sake of the things builded with hands. The robes of the votaries were grimy and greasy, and the prayer they poured out was sweat. They chewed tobacco and spat regardless. They eyed her as curiously as she them. They swaggered each his own way, one by extra obliviousness, another with a flourish of gesture. They seemed to want to speak, and so did she, but embarrassment caused a common silence.

On the ground they had cleared and under the roof they had established they had fashioned vessels that should carry not myrrh and nard to make a sweet smell or to end in a delicate smoke, but wheat, milk and coal, clothes and shoes and shells, for the feeding and warming of people in need, and for the destruction of the god of destruction.

Marie Louise's response to the mood of the place was conversion, a passion to take vows of eternal industry, to put on the holy vestments of toil and wield the—she did not even know the names of the tools. She only knew that they were sacred implements.

She was in an almost trancelike state when Davidge led her from this world with its own sky of glass to the outer world with the same old space-colored sky. He conducted her among heaps of material waiting to be assembled, the raw stuffs of creation.

As they drew near the almost finished ship the noise of the riveting which had been but a vague palpitation of the air became a well-nigh intolerable staccato.

Men were at work everywhere, Lilliputian against the bulk of the hull they were contriving. Davidge escorted Marie Louise with caution across tremulous planks, through dark caverns into the hold of the ship.

In these grottoes of steel the clamor of the riveters grew maddening in her ears. They were everywhere, holding their machine-guns against reverberant metal and hammering steel against steel with a superhuman velocity; for man had made himself more than man by his own inventions, had multiplied himself by his own machineries.

"That's the great Sutton," Davidge remarked, presently. "He's our prima donna. He's the champion riveter of this part of the country. Like to meet him?"

Marie Louise nodded yes before she noted that the man was stripped to the waist. Runnels of sweat ran down his flesh and shot from the muscles leaping beneath his swart hide.

Davidge went up to him and, after howling in vain, tapped his brawn. Sutton looked up, shut off his noise, and turned to Davidge with the impatience of a great tenor interrupted in a cadenza by a mere manager.

Davidge yelled, with unnecessary voltage:

"Sutton, I want to present you to Miss Webling."

Sutton realized his nakedness like another Adam, and his confusion confused Marie Louise. She nodded. He nodded. Perhaps he made his muscles a little tauter.

Davidge had planned to ask Sutton to let Marie Louise try to drive a rivet, just to show her how hopeless her ambition was, but he dared not loiter. Marie Louise, feeling silly in the silence, asked, stupidly:

"So that's a riveter?"

"Yes, ma'am," Sutton confessed, "this is a riveter."

"Oh!" said Marie Louise.

"Well, I guess we'll move on," said Davidge. As conversation, it was as unimportant as possible, but it had a negative historical value, since it left Marie Louise unconvinced of her inability to be a rivetress.

She said, "Thank you," and moved on. Davidge followed. Sutton took up his work again, as a man does after a woman has passed by, pretending to be indignant, trying by an added ferocity to conceal his delight.

At a distance Davidge paused to say: "He's a great card, Sutton. He gets a lot of money, but he earns it before he spends it, and he's my ideal of a workman. His work comes first. He hogs all the pay the traffic will bear, but he goes on working and he takes a pride in being better than anybody else in his line. So many of these infernal laborers have only one ideal—to do the least possible work and earn enough to loaf most of the time."

Marie Louise thought of some of Jake Nuddle's principles and wondered if she had done right in recommending him for a place on Davidge's pay-roll. She was afraid he would be a slacker, never dreaming that he would be industrious in all forms of destruction. Jake never demanded short hours for his conspiracies.

At the top of the unfinished deck Marie Louise forgot Jake and gave her mind up to admiring Davidge as the father of all this factory. He led her down, out and along the bottom-land, through bogs, among heaps of rusty iron, to a concrete building-slip. He seemed to be very important about something, but she could not imagine what it was. She saw nothing but a long girder made up of sections. It lay along a flat sheet of perforated steel—the homeliest contraption imaginable.

"Whatever is all this," she asked,— "the beginning of a bridge?"

"Yes and no. It's the beginning of part of the bridge we're building across the Atlantic."

"I don't believe that I quite follow you."

"This is the keel of a ship."

"No!"

"Yep!"

"And was the *Clara* like this once?"

"No. *Clara's* an old-fashioned creature like mother. This is a newfangled thing like—like you."

"Like me! This isn't—"

"This is to be the *Mamise*."

She could not hide her disappointment in her namesake.

"I must confess she's not very beautiful to start with."

"Neither were you at first, I suppose. I—I beg your pardon. I mean—"

He tried to tell her about the new principles of fabricated ships, the standardizing of the parts, and their manufacture at distances by various steel plants, the absence of curved lines, the advantage of all the sacrifice of the old art for the new speed.

In spite of what she had read she could not make his information her own. And yet it was thrilling to look at. She broke out:

"I've just got to learn how to build ships. It's the one thing on earth that will make me happy."

"Then I'll have to get it for you."

"You mean it?"

"If anything I could do could make you happy—cutting off my right arm, or—"

"That's no end nice of you. But I am in earnest. I'm wretchedly unhappy, doing nothing. We women, I fancy, are most of us just where boys are when they have outgrown boyhood and haven't reached manhood—when they are crazy to be at something, and can't even decide where to begin. Women have got to come out in the world and get to work. Here's my job, and I want it!"

He looked at the delicate hands she fluttered before him, and he smiled. She protested:

"I always loved physical exercise. In England I did the

roughest sort of farmwork. I'm stronger than I look. I think I'd rather play one of those rat-tat-tat instruments than—than a harp in New Jerusalem."

Davidge shook his head. "I'm afraid you're not quite strong enough. It takes a lot of power to hold the gun against the hull. The compressed air kicks and shoves so hard that even men tire quickly. Sutton himself has all he can do to keep alive."

"Give me a hammer, then, and let me—smite something."

"Don't you think you'd rather begin in the office? You could learn the business there first. Besides, I don't like the thought of your roughing up those beautiful hands of yours."

"If men would only quit trying to keep women's hands soft and clean, the world would be the better for it."

"Well, come down and learn the business first—you'd be nearer me."

She sidestepped this sentimental jab and countered with a practical left hook:

"But you'd teach me ship-building?"

"I'd rather teach you home-building."

"If you mean a home on the bounding main, I'll get right to work."

He was stubborn about beginning with office tasks, and he took her to the mold-loft. She was fascinated but appalled by her own ignorance of what had come to be the most important of all knowledge.

She sighed. "I've always been such a smatterer. I never have really known anything about anything. Most women are so astonishingly ignorant and indifferent about the essentials of men's life."

She secretly resolved that she would study some of the basic principles of male existence—bookkeeping, drafting, letter-writing, filing, trading. It amused her as a kind of new mischief to take a course of business instruction on the sly and report for duty not as an ignoramus, but as a past-mistress in office practice. It was at least a refreshing novelty in duplicity.

She giggled a little at the quaintness of her conspiracy. The old song, "Trust Her Not—She Is Fooling Thee," occurred to her in a fantastic parody: "Trust her not—she is fooling thee; she is clandestine at the business college; she is

leading a double-entry life. She writes you in longhand, but she is studying shorthand. She is getting to be very fast —on the typewriter."

Davidge asked her why she snickered, but she would not divulge her plot. She was impatient to spring it. She wondered if in a week she could learn all she had to learn—if she worked hard. It would be rather pleasant to sit at his desk-leaf and take dictation from him—confidential letters that he would intrust to no one else, letters written in a whisper and full of dark references. She hoped she could learn stenographic velocity in a few days.

As she and Davidge walked back to the car she noted the workmen's shanties.

"If I come here, may I live in one of those cunning new bungalettes?"

"Indeed not! There are some nice houses in town."

"I'm sick of nice houses. I want to rough it. In the next war millions of women will live in tents the way the men do. Those shanties would be considered palaces in Belgium and northern France. In fact, any number of women are over there now building huts for the poor souls."

Davidge grew more and more wretched. He could not understand such a twisted courtship. His sweetheart did not want jewels and luxuries and a life of wealthy ease. Her only interest in him seemed to be that he would let her live in a shanty, wear overalls, and pound steel all day for union wages.

CHAPTER III

AN eloquent contrast with Marie Louise was furnished by Jake Nuddle. He was of the ebb type. He was degenerating into a shirker, a destroyer, a money-maniac, a complainer of other men's successes. His labor was hardly more than a foundation for blackmailing. He loved no country, had not even a sense of following the crowd. He called the Star-spangled Banner a dirty rag, and he wanted to wipe his feet on it. He was useless, baneful, doomed.

Marie Louise was coming into a new Canaan. What she wanted was work for the work's sake, to be building something and thereby building herself, to be helping her country forward, to be helping mankind, poor and rich. The sight of the flag made her heart ache with a rapture of patriotism. She had the urge to march with an army.

Marie Louise was on the up grade, Jake on the down. They met at the gate of the shipyard.

Jake and Abbie had come over by train. Jake was surly in his tone to Davidge. His first question was, "Where do we live?"

Marie Louise answered, "In one of those quaint little cottages."

Jake frowned before he looked. He was one of those who hate before they see, feel nausea before they taste, condemn the unknown, the unheard, the unoffending.

By the time Jake's eyes had found the row of shanties his frown was a splendid thing.

"Quaint little hog-pens!" he growled. "Is this company the same as all the rest—treatin' its slaves like swine?"

Davidge knew the type. For the sake of Marie Louise he restrained his first impulses and spoke with amiable acidity:

"There are better houses in town, some of them very handsome."

"Yah—but what rent?"

"Rather expensive. Rather distant, too, but you can make it easily in an automobile."

"Where would I git a nautomobile?"

"I can introduce you to the man who sold me mine."

"How would I get the price?"

"Just where I did."

"Whurr's that?"

"Oh, all over the place. I used to be a common unskilled laborer like you. And now I own a good part of this business. Thousands of men who began poorer than I did are richer than I am. The road's just as open to you as to me."

Jake had plenty of answers for this. He had memorized numbers of them from the tracts; but also he had plans that would not be furthered by quarreling with Davidge the first day. He could do Davidge most harm by obeying him and outwardly catering to him. He solaced his pride with a thought of what Davidge's business would look like when he got through with it.

He laughed: "All right, boss. I was just beefin', for the fun of beefin'. Them shanties suit me elegant."

Then his fool wife had to go and bust in, "Oh, Jake, if you would do like Mr. Davidge done, and git rich and live easy!"

Jake gave her a pantomimic rebuke that reduced her to a pulpy silence.

Marie Louise thought to restore Abbie's spirits a little by saying that she herself was coming down to work and to live in one of those very shanties. But Abbie gave her up as hopeless. Why any one should want to leave a house like what Mamise had, and money in the bank, and no call to lift her hand for nothing except to ring a bell and get somebody to fetch anything, and leave all that and live like a squatter and acturally work—well, it did beat all how foolish some folks could be in the world nowadays.

Marie Louise left Abbie and Jake to establish themselves. She had to get back to Washington. Davidge had planned to go with her, but a long-distance telephone-call, and a visit from a group of prospective strikers, and a warning that a consignment of long-expected machinery had not yet arrived, took him out of the car. He was tempted to go with Marie Louise, anyway, but she begged him not to neglect his business

for her unimportant self, and bade him good-by in an old Wakefield phrase, "If I don't see you again, hello!"

She returned to Washington alone, but not lonely. Her thoughts smoked through her brain like a dust-cloud of shining particles, each radiant atom a great idea. The road home was through the sky; the villages and groves were vague pink clouds; the long downward slopes were shafts of sunlight, the ridges rainbows.

It would take her hardly any time to conquer the mysteries of stenography. Surely they must be easy, considering some of the people that practised the art. She would study ship-building, and drafting, too. Her water-color landscapes had been highly praised by certain young men and old ladies in England. She would learn how to keep her own bank-account and revamp her arithmetic. She would take up light book-keeping; and she would build up her strength in a gymnasium so that she could swing a sledge as well as the next one. She would offer her home in Washington for rent. With the mobs pouring in, it would not be untenanted long.

Her last expectation was realized first. The morning after she reached home she visited Mr. Hailstorks and told him she would sublet her mansion. Now that she wanted to collect rent from it instead of paying rent for it her description of its advantages was inevitably altered. With perfect sincerity she described its very faults as attractions.

Thereafter her life was made miserable by the calls of people who wanted to look the place over. She had incessant offers, but she would not surrender her nest till she was ready to go back to the shipyard, and that was always to-morrow—the movable to-morrow which like the horizon is always just beyond.

She sent herself to school and was dazed by her ignorance. In arithmetic she had forgotten what she had gained at the age of ten, and it was not easy to recapture it.

On the typewriter she had to learn the alphabet all over again in a new order, and this was fiendishly hard. She studied the touch-system with the keyboard covered, and her blunders were disheartening. Her deft fingers seemed hardly to be her own. They would not obey her will at all.

Shorthand was baffling. It took her five times as long to write in shorthand as in longhand such thrilling literature

as: "Dear customer,—Letter received and contents noted. In reply to same would say—"

At first she was a trifle snobbish and stand-offish with some of the pert young fellow-pupils, but before long her opinion of them increased to a respect verging on awe.

They could take dictation, chew gum, and fix their back hair with the free hand all at once. Their fingers pattered the keyboard like rain, and their letters were exquisitely neat. They had studied for a long time, and had acquired proficiency. And it is no easy thing to acquire proficiency in any task, from cobbling shoes to polishing sonnets or moving armies.

Marie Louise was humiliated to find that she really did not know how to spell some of the simplest words. When she wrote with running pen she never stopped to spell. She just sketched the words and let them go. She wrote, "I beleive I recieved," so that nobody could tell *e* from *i;* and she put the dot where it might apply to either. Her punctuation was all dashes.

The typewriter would not permit anything vague. A word stood out in its stark reality, howling "Illiterate!" at her. Her punctuation simply would not do.

Pert young misses who were honored by a wink from an ice-cream-soda-counter keeper or by an invitation to a street-car conductors' dance turned out work of a Grecian perfection, while Marie Louise bit her lips and blushed with shame under the criticisms of her teacher. She was back in school again, the dunce of the class, and abject discouragements alternated with spurts of zeal.

In the mean while the United States was also learning the rudiments of war and the enormous office-practice it required. Before the war was over the army of 118,000 men and 5,000 officers in February, 1917, would be an army of over 3,000,000, and of these over 2,000,000 would have been carried to Europe, half of them in British ships; 50,000 of these would be killed to Russia's 1,700,000 dead, Germany's 1,600,000, France's 1,385,000, England's 706,200, Italy's 406,000, and Belgium's 102,000. The wounded Americans would be three times the total present army. Everybody was ignorant, blunderful. Externally and internally the United States was as busy as a trampled ant-hill.

Everything in those days was done in drives. The armies made drives; the financiers made drives; the charities made drives. The world-heart was never so driven. And this was all on top of the ordinary human suffering, which did not abate one jot for all its overload. Teeth ached just as fiercely; jealousy was just as sickly green; empires crackled; people starved in herds; cities were pounded to gravel; army after army was taken prisoner or slaughtered; yet each agitated atom in the chaos was still the center of the tormented universe.

Marie Louise suffered for mankind and for herself. She was lonely, love-famished, inept, dissatisfied, and abysmally ashamed of her general ineffectiveness. Then one of Washington's infamous hot weeks supervened. In the daytime the heat stung like a cat-o'-nine-tails. The nights were suffocation. She "slept," gasping as a fish flounders on dry land. After the long strain of fighting for peace, toiling for rest, the mornings would find Marie Louise as wrecked as if she had come in from a prolonged spree. Then followed a day of drudgery at the loathly necessities of her stupid work.

Detail and delay are the tests of ambition. Ambition sees the mountain-peak blessed with sunlight and cries, "That is my goal!" But the feet must cross every ditch, wade every swamp, scramble across every ledge. The peak is the harder to see the nearer it comes; the last cliffs hide it altogether, and when it is reached it is only a rough crag surrounded by higher crags. The glory that lights it is glory in distant eyes alone.

So for poor Mamise. She had run away from a squalid home to the gorgeous freedom of stage-life, only to find that the stage also is squalid and slavish, and that the will-o'-the-wisp of gorgeous freedom had jumped back to home life. She left the cheap theaters for the expensive luxury of Sir Joseph's mansion. But that had its squalors and slaveries, too. She had fled from troubled England to joyous America, only to find in America a thousand distresses.

Then her eyes had been caught with the glitter of true freedom. She would be a builder of ships—cast off the restraint of womanhood and be a magnificent builder of ships! And now she was finding that this dream was also a nightmare.

Everywhere she looked was dismay, futility, failure. The hot wave found her an easy victim. A frightened servant

who did not know the difference between sunstroke and heat prostration nearly killed her before a doctor came.

The doctor sent Marie Louise to bed, and in bed she stayed. It was her trained nurse who wrote a letter to Mr. Davidge regretting that she could not come to the launching of the *Clara*. Abbie was not present, either. She came up to be with Marie Louise. This was not the least of Marie Louise's woes.

She was quite childish about missing the great event. She wept because another hand swung the netted champagne-bottle against the bow as it lurched down the toboggan-slide.

Davidge wrote her about the launching, but it was a business man's letter, with the poetry all smothered. He told her that there had been an accident or two, and nearly a disaster—an unexploded infernal-machine had been found. A scheme to wreck the launching-ways had been detected on the final inspection.

Marie Louise read the letter aloud to Abbie, and, even though she knew the ship was safe, trembled as if it were still in jeopardy. Her shaken faith in humanity was still capable of feeling bewilderment at the extremes of German savagery. She cried out to her sister:

"How on earth can anybody be fiendish enough to have tried to destroy that ship even before it was launched? How could a German spy have got into the yard?"

"It didn't have to have been a German," said Abbie, bitterly.

"Who else would have wanted to play such a dastardly trick? No American would!"

"Well, it depends on what you call Amurrican," said Abbie. "There's some them Independent workmen so independent they ain't got any country any more 'n what Cain had."

"You can't suppose that Mr. Davidge has enemies among his own people?"

"O' course he has! Slews of 'em. Some them workmen can't forgive the man that gives 'em a job."

"But he pays big wages. Think of what Jake gets."

"Oh, him! If he got all they was, he'd holler he was bein' cheated. Hollerin' and hatin' always come easy to Jake. If they wasn't easy, he wouldn't do 'em."

Marie Louise gasped: "Abbie! In Heaven's name, you don't imply—"

"No, I don't!" snapped Abbie. "I never implied in my life, and don't you go sayin' I did."

Abbie was at bay now. She had to defend her man from outside suspicion. Suspicion of her husband is a wife's prerogative

Marie Louise was too much absorbed in the general vision of man's potential villainy to follow up the individual clue. She was frightened away from considering Jake as a candidate for such infamy. Her wildest imaginings never put him in association with Nicky Easton.

There were so many excursions and alarms in the world of 1917 that the riddle of who tried to sink the ship on dry land joined a myriad others in the riddle limbo.

When Marie Louise was well enough to go back to her business school she found riddles enough in trying to decide where this letter or that had got to on the crazy keyboard, or what squirmy shorthand symbol it was that represented this syllable or that.

She had lost the little speed she had had, and it was double drudgery regaining the forgotten lore. But she stood the gaff and found herself on the dizzy height of graduation from a lowly business school. She had traveled a long way from the snobbery of her recent years.

Davidge recognized her face and her voice when she presented herself before him. But her soul was an utter stranger. She did not invite him to call on her or warn him that she was coming to call on him.

She appeared in his anteroom and bribed one of the clerks to go to him with a message:

"A young lady's outside—wants a position—as a stenogerpher."

Davidge growled without looking up:

"Why bother me? Send her to the chief clerk."

"She wants to see you specially."

"I'm out."

"Said Miss Webling sent her.'

"O Lord!—show her in."

Marie Louise entered. Davidge looked up, leaped up.

She did not come in with the drawing-room, train-dragging

manner of Miss Webling. She did not wear the insolent beauty of Mamise of the Musical Mokes. She was a white-waisted, plain-skirted office-woman, a businessette. She had a neat little hat and gave him a secretarial bow.

He rushed to her hand, and they had a good laugh like two children playing pretend. Then he said:

"Why the camouflage?"

The word was not very new even then, or he would not have used it.

She explained, with royal simplicity:

"I want a job."

She brought out her diploma and a certificate giving her a civil-service status. She was quite conceited about it.

She insisted on displaying her accomplishments.

"Give me some dictation," she dictated.

He nodded, pummeled his head for an idea while she took from her hand-bag, not a vanity-case, but a stenographer's note-book and a sheaf of pencils.

He noted that she sat down stenographically—very concisely. She perched her note-book on the desk of one crossed knee and perked her eyes up as alertly as a sparrow.

All this professionalism sat so quaintly on the two Marie Louises he had known that he roared with laughter as at a child dressed up.

She smiled patiently at his uproar till it subsided. Then he sobered and began to dictate:

"Ready? 'Miss Mamise'—cross that out—'Miss Marie Louise Webling'—you know the address; I don't. 'Dear—My dear'—no, just 'Dear Miss Webling. Reference is had to your order of recent date that this house engage you as amanuensis.' Dictionary in the bookcase outside—comma—no, period. 'In reply I would—I wish to—I beg to—we beg to say that we should—I should just as soon engage Mona Lisa for a stenographer as you.' Period and paragraph

"'We have,'—comma,—'however,'—comma,—'another position to offer you,'—comma,—'that is, as wife to the senior member of this firm.' Period. 'The best wages we can—we can offer you are—is the use of one large,'—comma,—'slightly damaged heart and a million thanks a minute.' Period. 'Trusting that we may be favored with a prompt and favorable reply, we am—I are—am—yours very sin-

cerely, truly yours,'—no, just say 'yours,' and I'll sign it. By the way, do you know what the answer will be?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean it?"

"I mean that I know the answer."

"Let me have it."

"Can't you guess?"

"'Yes'?"

"No."

"Oh!"

A long glum pause till she said, "Am I fired?"

"Of course not."

More pause. She intervened in his silence.

"What do I do next, please?"

He said, of habit, "Why, sail on, and on, and on."

He reached for his basket of unanswered mail. He said:

"I've given you a sample of my style, now you give me a sample of yours, and then I'll see if I can afford to keep you as a stenographer instead of a wife."

She nodded, went to a typewriter in a corner of his office, and seated herself at the musicless instrument. Her heart pit-a-patted as fast as her fingers, but she drew up the letter in a handsome style while he sat and stared at her and mused upon the strange radiance she brought into the office in a kind of aureole.

He grew abruptly serious when Miss Gabus, his regular stenographer, entered and stared at the interloper with amazement, comma, suspicion, comma, and hostility, period. She murmured a very rasping "I beg your pardon," and stepped out, as Marie Louise rose from the writing-machine and brought him an extraordinarily accurate version of his letter.

And now he had two women on his hands and one on his heart. He dared not oust Miss Gabus for the sake of Miss Webling. He dared not show his devotion to Marie Louise, though as a matter of fact it made him glow like a lighthouse.

He put Mamise to work in the chief clerk's office. It was noted that he made many more trips to that office than ever before. Instead of pressing the buzzer for a boy or a stenographer, he usually came out himself on all sorts of errands. His buzzer did not buzz, but the gossip did.

Mamise was vaguely aware of it, and it distressed her till

she grew furious. She was so furious at Davidge for not being deft enough to conceal his affection that she began to resent it as an offense and not a compliment.

The impossible Mamise insisted on taking up her residence in one of the shanties. When he took the liberty of urging her to live at a hotel or at some of the more comfortable homes she snubbed him bluntly. When he desperately urged her to take lunch or dinner with him she drew herself up and mocked the virtuous scorn of a movie stenographer and said:

'Sir! I may be only a poor typist, but no wicked capitalist shall loor me to lunch with him. You'd probably drug the wine."

"Then will you—"

"No, I will not go motoring with you. How dare you!"

"May I call, then?"

More as a punishment than a hospitality, she said:

"Yessir—the fourteenth house on the left side of the road is me."

The days were still long and the dark tardy when he marched up the street. It was a gantlet of eyes and whispers. He felt inane to an imbecility. The whole village was eying the boss on his way to spark a stenog. His little love-affair was as clandestine as Lady Godiva's famous bareback ride.

He cut his call short after an age-long half-hour of enduring the ridicule twinkling in Mamise's eyes. He stayed just late enough for it to get dark enough to conceal his return through that street. He was furious at the situation and at Mamise for teasing him so. But she became all the dearer for her elusiveness.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER the novelty of the joke wore off Mamise grew as uncomfortable as he. She was beginning to love him more and her job less. But she was determined not to throw away her independence. Pride was her duenna, and a ruthless one. She tried to feed her pride on her ambition and on an occasional visit to the ship that was to wear her name.

She met Sutton, the prima donna riveter. He was always clattering away like a hungry woodpecker, but he always had time to stop and discuss his art with her.

Once or twice he let her try the riveter—the "gun," he called it; but her thumb was not strong enough to hold the trigger against that hundred-and-fifty-pound pressure per square inch.

One day Marie Louise came on Jake Nuddle and Sutton in a wrangle. She caught enough of the parley to know that Jake was sneering at Sutton's waste of energy and enthusiasm, his long hours and low pay. Sutton earned a very substantial income, but all pay was low pay to Jake, who was spreading the gospel of sabotage through the shipyard.

Meanwhile the good ship *Clara*, weaned from the dock, floated in the basin and received her equipment. And at last the day came when she was ready for her trial trip.

That morning the smoke rolled from her funnels in a twisted skein. What had once been ore in many a mine, and trees in many a forest, had become an individual, as what has been vegetables and fruits and the flesh of animals becomes at last a child with a soul, a name, a fate.

It was impossible to think now that the *Clara* was merely an iron box with an engine to push it about. *Clara* was somebody, a personality, a lovable, whimsical, powerful creature. She was "she" to everybody. And at last one morning she kicked up her heels and took a long white bone in her teeth and went her ways.

The next day *Clara* came back. There was something

about her manner of sweeping into the bay, about the proud look of her as she came to a halt, that convinced all the watchers in the shipyard of her success.

When they learned that she had exceeded all her contract stipulations there was a tumult of rejoicing; for her success was the success of every man and lad in the company's employ—at least so thought all who had any instinct of team-play and collective pride. A few soreheads were glum, or sneered at the enthusiasm of the others. It was strange that Jake Nuddle was associated with all of these groups.

Clara was not permitted to linger and rest on her laurels. She had work to do. Every ship in the world was working overtime except the German Kiel Canal boats. *Clara* was gone from the view the next morning. Mamise missed her as she looked from the office window. She mentioned this to Davidge, for fear he might not know. Somebody might have stolen her. He explained:

"She's going down to Norfolk to take on a cargo of food for England—wheat for the Allies. I'm glad she's going to take breadstuffs to people. My mother used to be always going about to hungry folks with a basket of food on her arm."

Mamise had Jake and Abbie in to dinner that night. She was all agog about the success of *Clara*, and hoped that *Mamise* would one day do as well.

Jake took a sudden interest in the matter. "Did the boss tell you where the *Clara* was goin' to?"

"Yes—Norfolk."

Jake considered his unmentionable cigar a few minutes, then rose and mumbled:

"Goin' out to get some more cigars."

Abbie called after him, "Hay, you got a whole half-box left." But Jake did not seem to hear the recall.

He came back later cigarless and asked for the box.

"I thought you went out to git some," said Abbie, who felt it necessary to let no occasion slip for reminding him of some blunder he had made. Jake laughed very amiably.

"Well, so I did, and I went into a cigar-store, at that. But I hadda telephone a certain party, long-distance—and I forgot."

Abbie broke in, "Who you got to long-distance to?"

Jake did not answer.

Two days later Davidge was so proud that he came out into the main office and told all the clerks of the new distinction.

"They loaded the *Clara* in record time with wheat for England. She sails to-day."

At his first chance to speak to Marie Louise he said:

"You compared her to Little Red Riding Hood—remember? Well, she's starting out through the big woods with a lot of victuals for old Granny England. If only the wolves don't get her!"

He felt, and Mamise felt, as lonely and as anxious for her as if she were indeed a little red-bonneted forest-farer on an errand of mercy.

Ships have always been dear to humankind because of the dangers they run and because of the pluck they show in storms and fires, and the unending fights they make against wind and wave. But of late they had had unheard-of enemies to meet, the submarine and the infernal-machine placed inside the cargo.

Marie Louise spoke of this at the supper-table that night:

"To think, with so little food in the world and so many starving to death, people could sink ships full of wheat!"

On the second day after the *Clara* set forth on the ocean Marie Louise took dictation for an hour and wrote out her letters as fast as she could. In the afternoon she took the typewritten transcripts into Davidge's office to drop them into his "in" basket.

The telephone rang. His hand went out to it, and she heard him say:

"Mr. Davidge speaking. . . . Hello, Ed. . . . What? You're too close to the 'phone. . . . That's better. . . . You're too far away—start all over. . . . I don't get that. . . . Yes—a life-boat picked up with what—oh, six survivors. Yes—from what ship? I say, six survivors from what ship? . . . The *Clara*? She's gone? *Clara*?"

He reeled and wavered in his chair. "What happened—many lost? And the boat—cargo—everything—everybody but those six! They got her, then! The Germans got her—on her first voyage! God damn their guts! . Good-by, Ed."

He seemed to be calm, but the hand that held up the

receiver groped for the hook with a pitiful blind man's gesture.

Mamise could not resist that blundering helplessness. She ran forward and took his hand and set the receiver in place.

He was too numb to thank her, but he was grateful. His mother was dead. The ship he had named for her was dead. He needed mothering.

Mamise put her hands on his shoulders and gripped them as if to hold them together under their burden. She said:

"I heard. I can't tell you how— Oh, what can we do in such a world!"

He laughed foolishly and said, with a stumbling voice:

"I'll get a German for this—somehow!"

CHAPTER V

MAMISE shuddered when she heard the blood-cry wrung out of Davidge's agony.

She knew that the ship was more than a ship to him. Its death was as the death of many children. It might mean the death of many children. She stood over him, weeping for him like another Niobe among her slaughtered family. The business man in his tragedy had to have some woman at hand to do his weeping for him. He did not know how to sob his own heart out.

She felt the vigor of a high anger grip his muscles. When she heard him groan, "I'll get a German for this!" somehow it horrified her, coming from him; yet it was becoming the watchword of the whole nation.

America had stood by for three years feeding Europe's hungry and selling munitions to the only ones that could come and get them. America had been forced into the war by the idiotic ingenuities of the Germans, who kept frustrating all their own achievements, the cruel ones thwarting the clever ones; the liars undermining the fighters; the wise, who knew so much, not knowing the first thing—that torture never succeeded, that a reputation for broken faith is the most expensive of all reputations, that a policy of terror and trickery and megalomania can accomplish nothing but its own eventual ruin.

America was aroused at last. The German rhinoceros in its blind charges had wakened and enraged the mammoth. A need for German blood was the frank and undeniable passion of the American Republic. To kill enough Germans fast enough to crush them and their power and their glory was the acknowledged business of the United States until further notice.

The strangest people were voicing this demand. Preachers were thundering it across their pulpits, professors across their

desks, women across their cradles, pacifists across their shattered dreams, business men across their counters, "Kill Germans!"

It was a frightful crusade; yet who was to blame for it but the Germans and their own self-advertised frightfulness? The world was fighting for its life and health against a plague, a new outrush from that new plague-spot whence so many floods of barbarism had broken over civilization.

They came forth now in gray streams like the torrent of rats that pursued the wicked Bishop Hatto to his tower. Only the world was not Bishop Hatto, and it did not flee. It gathered to one vast circular battle, killing and killing rats upon rats in a frenzy of loathing that grew with the butchery.

Countless citizens of German origin fought and died with the Americans, but nobody thought of them as Germans now, and least of all did they so think of themselves. In the mind of the Allied nations, German and vermin were linked in rhyme and reason.

It may be unjust and unsympathetic, but the very best people feel it a duty to destroy microbes, insects, and beasts of prey without mercy. The Germans themselves had proclaimed their own nature with pride. Peaceful Belgium—invaded, burned, butchered, ravished, dismantled, mulcted, deported, enslaved—was the first sample of German work.

Davidge had hated Germany's part in the war from the first, for the world's sake, for the sake of the little nations trampled and starved and the big nations thrown into desperation, and for the insolence and omnipresence of the German menace—for the land filled with graves, the sea with ships, the air with indiscriminate slaughter.

Now it had come straight home to himself. His own ship was assassinated; the hill of wheat she carried had been spilled into the sterile sea. Nearly all of her crew had been murdered or drowned. He had a blood-feud of his own with Germany.

He was startled to find Mamise recoiling from him. He looked at her with a sudden demand:

"Does it shock you to have me hate 'em?"

"No! No, indeed!" she cried. "I wasn't thinking of them, but of you. I never saw you before like this. You scared me a little. I didn't know you could be so angry."

"I'm not half as angry as I'd like to be. Don't you abominate 'em, too?"

"Oh yes—I wish that Germany were one big ship and all the Germans on board, and I had a torpedo big enough to blast them all to—where they belong."

This wish seemed to him to prove a sufficient lack of affection for the Germans, and he added, "Amen!" with a little nervous reaction into uncouth laughter.

But this was only another form of his anguish. At such times the distraught soul seems to have need of all its emotions and expressions, and to run among them like a frantic child.

Davidge's next mood was a passionate regret for the crew, the dead engineers and sailors shattered and blasted and cast into the sea, the sufferings of the little squad that escaped into a life-boat without water or provisions or shelter from the sun and the lashing spray.

Then he pictured the misery of hunger that the ship's cargo would have relieved. He had been reading much of late of the Armenian—what word or words could name that woe so multitudinous that, like the number of the stars, the mind refused to attempt its comprehension?

He saw one of those writhing columns winding through a rocky wilderness—old crones knocked aside to shrivel with famine, babies withering like blistered flowers from the flattened breasts of their mothers dying with hunger, fatigue, blows, violation, and despair. He thought of Poland childless and beyond pity; of the Serbian shambles. The talons of hunger a millionfold clutched him, and he groaned aloud:

"If they'd only stolen my wheat and given it to somebody—to anybody! But to pour it into the sea!"

He could not linger in that slough and stay sane. His struggling soul broke loose from the depths and hunted safety in self-ridicule:

"I might better have left the wheat at home and never have built the fool ship."

He began to laugh again, an imbecile ironic cachinnation.

"The blithering idiot I've been! To go and work and work and work, and drive my men and all the machinery for months and months to make a ship and put in the engines and send it down and load it, and all for some"—a gesture expressed

his unspeakable thought—"of a German to blow it to hell and gone, with a little clock-bomb in one second!"

In his abysmal discouragement his ideals were all topsy-turvy. He burlesqued his own religion as the most earnest constantly do, for we all revolve around ourselves as well as our suns.

"What's the use," he maundered—"what's the use of trying to do anything while they're alive and at work right here in our country? They're everywhere! They swarm like cockroaches out of every hole as soon as the light gets low! We've got to blister 'em all to death with rough-on-rats before we can build anything that will last. There's no stopping them without wiping 'em off the earth."

She did not argue with him. At such times people do not want arguments or good counsel or correction. They want somebody to stand by in mute fellowship to watch and listen and suffer, too. So Mamise helped Davidge through that ordeal. He turned from rage at the Germans to contempt for himself.

"It's time I quit out of this and went to work with the army. It makes me sick to be here making ships for Germans to sink. The thing to do is to kill the Germans first and build the ships when the sea is safe for humanity. I'm ashamed of myself sitting in an office shooting with a telephone and giving out plans and contracts and paying wages to a gang of mechanics. It's me for a rifle and a bayonet."

Mamise had to oppose this:

"Who's going to get you soldiers across the sea or feed you when you get there if all the ship-builders turn soldier?"

"Let somebody else do it."

"But who can do it as well as you can? The Germans said that America could never put an army across or feed it if she got it there. If you go on strike you'll prove the truth of that."

Then she began to chant his own song to him. A man likes to hear his nobler words recalled. Here is one of the best resources a woman has. Mamise was speaking for him as well as for herself when she said:

"Oh, I remember how you thrilled me with your talk of all the ships you would build. You said it was the greatest poem ever written, the idea of making ships faster than the Germans

could sink them. It was that that made me want to be a ship-builder. It was the first big ambition I ever had. And now you tell me it's useless and foolish!"

He saw the point without further pressure.

"You're right," he said. "My job's here. It would be selfish and showy to knock off this work and grab a gun. I'll stick. It's hard, though, to settle down here when everybody else is bound for France."

Mamise was one of those unusual wise persons who do not continue to argue a case that has already been won. She added only the warm personal note to help out the cold generality.

"There's my ship to finish, you know. You couldn't leave poor *Mamise* out there on the stocks unfinished."

The personal note was so warm that he reached out for her. He needed her in his arms. He caught her roughly to him and knew for the first time the feel of her body against his, the sweet compliance of her form to his embrace.

But there was an anachronism to her in the contact. She was in one of those moods of exaltation, of impersonal nationalism, that women were rising to more and more as a new religion. She was feeling terribly American, and, though she had no anger for him and saw no insult in his violence, she seemed to be above and beyond mere hugging and kissing. She was in a Joan of Arc humor, so she put his hands away, yet squeezed them with fervor, for she knew that she had saved him from himself and to himself. She had brought him back to his east again, and the morning is always wonderful.

She had renewed his courage, however, so greatly that he did not despair of her. He merely postponed her, as people were postponing everything beautiful and lovable "for the duration of the war."

He reached for the buzzer. Already Mamise heard its rattlesnake clatter. But his hand paused and went to hers as he stammered:

"We've gone through this together, and you've helped me—I can't tell you how much, honey. Only, I hope we can go through a lot more trouble together. There's plenty of it ahead."

She felt proud and meek and dismally happy. She squeezed his big hand again in both of hers and sighed, with a smile:

"I hope so."

Then he pressed the buzzer, and Miss Gabus was inside the door with suspicious promptitude. Davidge said:

"Mr. Avery, please—and the others—all the others right away. Ask them to come here; and you might come back, Miss Gabus."

Mr. Avery, the chief clerk, and other clerks and stenographers, gathered, wondering what was about to happen. Some of them came grinning, for when they had asked Miss Gabus what was up she had guessed: "I reckon he's goin' to announce his engagement."

The office force came in like an ill-drilled comic-opera chorus. Davidge waited till the last-comer was waiting. Then he said:

"Folks, I've just had bad news. The *Clara*—they got her! The Germans got her. She was blown up by a bomb. She was two days out and going like a greyhound when she sank with all on board except six of the crew who got away in a lifeboat and were picked up by a tramp."

There was a shock of silence, then a hubbub of gasps, oaths, of incredulous protests.

Miss Gabus was the first to address Davidge:

"My Gawd! Mr. Davidge, what you goin' to do about it?"

They thought him a man of iron when he said, quietly:

"We'll build some more ships. And if they sink those we'll—build some more."

He was a man of iron, but iron can bend and break and melt, and so can steel. Yet there is a renewal of strength, and, thanks to Mamise, Davidge was recalled to himself, though he was too shrewd or too tactful to give her the credit for redeeming him.

His resolute words gave the office people back to their own characters or their own reactions and their first phrases. Each had something to say. One, "She was such a pretty boat!" another, "Was she insured, d'you suppose?" a third, a fourth, and the rest: "The poor engineer—and the sailors!" "All that work for nothin'!" "The money she cost!" "The Belgians could 'a' used that wheat!" "Those Germans! Is there anything they won't do?"

The chief clerk shepherded them back to their tasks. Davidge took up the telephone to ask for more steel. Mamise renewed the cheerful *rap-rap-rap* of her typewriter.

The shock that struck the office had yet to rush through the yard. There was no lack of messengers to go among the men with the bad word that the first of the Davidge ships had been destroyed. It was a personal loss to nearly everybody, as it had been to Davidge, for nearly everybody had put some of his soul and some of his sweat into that slow and painful structure so instantly annulled. The mockery of the wasted toil embittered every one. The wrath of the workers was both loud and ferocious.

Jake Nuddle was one of the few who did not revile the German plague. He was not in the least excited over the dead sailors. They did not belong to his union. Besides, Jake did not love work or the things it made. He claimed to love the workers and the money they made.

He was tactless enough to say to a furious orator:

"Ah, what's it to you? The more ships the Germans sink the more you got to build and the more they'll have to pay you. If Davidge goes broke, so much the better. The sooner we bust these capitalists the sooner the workin'-man gets his rights."

The orator retorted: "This is war-times. We got to make ships to win the war."

Jake laughed. "Whose war is it? The capitalists'. You're fightin' for Morgan and Rockefeller to save their investments and to help 'em to grind you into the dirt. England and France and America are all land-grabbers. They're no better 'n Germany."

The workers wanted a scapegoat, and Jake unwittingly volunteered. They welcomed him with a bloodthirsty roar. They called him vigorous shipyard names and struck at him. He backed off. They followed. He made a crucial mistake; he whirled and ran. They ran after him. Some of them threw hammers and bolts. Some of these struck him as he fled. Workmen ahead of him were roused by the noise and headed him off.

He darted through an opening in the side of the *Mamise*. The crowd followed him, chased him out on an upper deck.

"Throw him overboard! Kill him!" they shouted.

He took refuge behind Sutton the riveter, whose gun had made such noise that he had heard none of the clamor. Seeing Jake's white face and the mark of a thrown monkey-wrench

on his brow, Sutton shut off the compressed air and confronted the pursuers. He was naked to the waist, and he had no weapon, but he held them at bay while he demanded:

"What's the big idea? What you playin'? Puss in a corner? How many of yous guys does it take to lick this one gink?"

A burly patriot, who forgot that his name and nis accent were Teutonic, roared:

"Der sneagin' Sohn off a peach ain't sorry *die Clara* is by dose tam Chermans *gesunken!*"

"What!" Sutton howled. "The *Clara* sunk? Whatya mean —sunk?"

Bohlmann told him. Sutton wavered. He had driven thousands of rivets into the frame of the ship, and a little explosive had opened all the seams and ended her days! When at last he understood the *Clara's* fate and Nuddle's comments he turned to Jake with baleful calm:

"And you thought it was good business, did you? And these fellers was thinkin' about lynchin' you, was they? Well, they're all wrong—they're all wrong: we'd ought to save lynchin' for real guys. What you need is somethin' like—this!"

His terrific fist lashed out and caught Jake in the right eye. Jake in a daze of indignation and amazement went over backward; his head struck the steel deck, and his soul went out. When it came back he lay still for a while, pretending to be unconscious until the gang had dispersed, satisfied, and Sutton was making ready to begin riveting again. Then he picked himself up and edged round Sutton, growling:

"I'll fix you for this, you—"

Sutton did not wait to learn what Jake was going to call him. His big foot described an upward arc, and Jake a parabola, ending in a drop that almost took him through an open hatch into the depth of the hold. He saved himself, peering over the edge, too weak for words—hunched back, crawled around the steel abyss, and betook himself to a safe hiding-place under the tank-top till the siren should blow and disperse his enemies.

CHAPTER VI

THE office force left pretty promptly on the hour. When Mamise noted that desks were being cleared for inaction she began mechanically to conform. Then she paused.

On other afternoons she had gone home with the crowd of employees, too weary with office routine to be discontent. But now she thought of Davidge left alone in his office to brood over his lost ship, the brutal mockery of such loving toil. It seemed heartless to her as his friend to desert him in the depths. But as one of his stenographers, it would look shameless to hang round with the boss. She shifted from foot to foot and from resolve to resolve.

Their relations were undergoing as many strains and stresses as a ship's frame in the various waves and weathers that confront it. She had picked up some knowledge of the amazing twists a ship encounters at rest and in motion—stresses in still water, with cargo and without, hogging and sagging stresses, seesaw strains, tensile, compressive, transverse, racking, pounding; bumps, blows, collisions, oscillations, running aground—stresses that crumpled steel or scissored the rivets in two.

It was hard to foresee the critical stress that should mean life or death to the ship and its people. Some went humbly forth and came home with rich cargo; some steamed out in pride and never came back; some limped in from the sea racked and ruined; some ran stupidly ashore in fogs; some fought indomitably through incredible tempests. Some died dramatic deaths on cliffs where tidal waves hammered them to shreds; some turned turtle at their docks and went down in the mud. Some led long and honorable lives, and others, beginning with glory, degenerated into cattle-ships or coastal tramps.

People were but ships and bound for as many destinations and destinies. Their fates depended as much and yet as

little on their pilots and engineers, their engines and their frames. The test of the ship and of the person was the daily drudgery and the unforeseen emergency.

Davidge believed in preliminary tests of people and boats. Before he hired a man or trusted a partner he inquired into his past performances. He had been unable to insist on investigation in the recent mad scramble for labor due to the sudden withdrawal into the national army of nearly every male between twenty-one and thirty-one and of hundreds of thousands of volunteers of other ages.

He had given his heart to Marie Louise Webling, of whom he knew little except that she would not tell him much. And on her dubious voucher he had taken Jake Nuddle into his employ. Now he had to accept them as he had to accept steel, taking it as it came and being glad to get any at all.

Hitherto he had insisted on preliminary proofs. He wanted no steel in a ship's hull or in any part of her that had not behaved well in the shop tests, in the various machines that put the metal under bending stress, cross-breaking, hammering, drifting, shearing, elongation, contraction, compression, deflection, tension, and torsion stresses. The best of the steels had their elastic limits; there was none that did not finally snap.

Once this point was found, the individual metal was placed according to its quality, the responsibility imposed on it being only a tenth of its proved capacity. That ought to have been enough of a margin of safety. Yet it did not prevent disasters.

People could not always be put to such shop tests beforehand. A reference or two, a snap judgment based on first impressions, ushered a man or a woman into a place where weakness or malice could do incalculable harm. In every institution, as in every structure, these danger-spots exist. Davidge, for all his care and knowledge of people, could only take the best he could get.

Jake Nuddle had got past the sentry-line with ludicrous ease and had contrived already the ruin of one ship. His program, which included all the others, had had a little setback, but he could easily regain his lost ground, for the mob had vented its rage against him and was appeased.

Mamise was inside the sentry-lines, too, both of Davidge's shop and his heart. Her purposes were loyal, but she was

drifting toward a supreme stress that should try her inmost fiber. And at the moment she felt an almost unbearable strain in the petty decision of whether to go with the clerks or stop with the boss.

Mamise was not so much afraid of what the clerks would say of her. It was Davidge that she was protecting. She did not want to have them talking about him—as if anything could have stopped them from that!

While she debated between being unselfish enough to leave him unconsoled and being selfish enough to stay, she spent so much time that the outer office was empty, anyway.

Seeing herself alone, she made a quick motion toward the door. Miss Gabus came out, stared violently, and said:

"Was you goin' in?"

"No—oh no!" said Mamise. "I left something in my desk."

She opened her desk, took out a pencil-nub and hurried away, ostentatiously passing the other clerks as they struggled across the yard to the gate.

She walked to her shanty and found it all pins and needles. She was so desperate that she went to see her sister.

Marie Louise found Abbie in her kitchen, sewing buttons on the extremely personal property of certain bachelors whom she washed for in spite of Jake's high earnings—from which she benefited no more than before. If Jake had come into a million, or shattered the world to bits and then rebuilt it nearer to his heart's desire, he would not have had enough to make much difference to Abbie. Mamise had made many handsome presents to Abbie, but somehow they vanished, or at least got Abbie no farther along the road to contentment or grace.

Mamise was full of the story of the disaster to the *Clara*. She drew Abbie into the living-room away from the children, who were playing in the kitchen because it was full of the savor of the forthcoming supper.

"Abbie dear, have you heard the news?"

Abbie gasped, "Oh God, is anything happened to Jake—killed or arrested or anything?"

"No, no—but *Clara*—the *Clara*—"

"Clara who?"

"The ship, the first ship we built, she's destroyed."

"For the land's sake! I want to know! Well, what you know about that!"

Abbie could not rise to very lofty heights of emotion or language over anything impersonal. She made hardly so much noise over this tragedy as a hen does over the delivery of an egg.

Mamise was distressed by her stolidity. She understood with regret why Jake did not find Abbie an ideal inspirational companion. She hated to think well of Jake or ill of her sister, but one cannot help receiving impressions.

She did her best to stimulate Abbie to a decent warmth, but Abbie was as immune to such appeals as those people were who were still wondering why America went to war with Germany.

Abbie was entirely perfunctory in her responses to Mamise's pictures of the atrocity. She grew really indignant when she looked at the clock and saw that Jake was late to dinner. She broke in on Mamise's excitement with a distressful:

"And we got steak 'n' cab'ge for supper."

"I must hurry back to my own shack," said Mamise, rising.

"You stay right where you are. You're goin' to eat with us."

"Not to-night, thanks, dear."

She kept no servant of her own. She enjoyed the circumstance of getting her meals. She was camping out in her shanty. To-night she wanted to be busy about something especially about a kitchen—the machine-shop of the woman who wants to be puttering at something.

She was dismally lonely, but she was not equal to a supper at Jake's. She would have liked a few children of her own, but she was glad that she did not own the Nuddle children, especially the elder two.

The Nuddles had given three hostages to Fortune. Jake cared little whether Fortune kept the hostages or not, or whether or not she treated them as the Germans treated Belgian hostages.

Little Sister was the oldest of the trio completed by Little Brother and a middle-sized bear named Sam. Sis and Sam were juvenile anarchists born with those gifts of mischief, envy, indolence, and denunciation that Jake and the literary press-agents of the same spirit flattered as philosophy or even

as philanthropy. Little Brother was a quiet, patient gnome with quaint instincts of industry and accumulation. He was always at work at something. His mud-pie bakery was famous for two blocks. He gathered bright pebbles and shells. In the marble season he was a plutocrat in taws and agates. Being always busy, he always had time to do more things. He even volunteered to help his mother. When he got an occasional penny he hoarded it in hiding. He had need to, for Sam borrowed what he could and stole what he could not wheedle.

Little Brother was not stingy, but he saved; he bought his mother petty gifts once in a while when he had enough to pay for something.

Little Sister and Sam were capable in emotional crises of sympathy or hatred to express themselves volubly. Little Brother had no gifts of speech. He made gifts of pebbles or of money awkwardly, shyly, with few words. Mamise, as she tried to extricate herself from Abbie's lassoing hospitality, paused in the door and studied the children, contrasting them with the Webling grandchildren who had been born with gold spoons in their mouths and somebody to take them out, fill them, and put them in again. But luxury seemed to make small difference in character.

She mused upon the three strange beings that had come into the world as a result of the chance union of Jake and Abbie. Without that they would never have existed and the world would have never known the difference, nor would they.

Sis and Sam were quarreling vigorously. Little Brother was silent upon the hearth. He had collected from the gutter many small stones and sticks. They were treasures to him and he was as important about them as a miser about his shekels. Again and again he counted them, taking a pleasure in their arithmetic. Already he was advanced in mathematics beyond the others and he loved to arrange his wealth for the sheer delight of arrangement; orderliness was an instinct with him already.

For a time Mamise noted how solemnly he kept at work, building a little stone house and painfully making it stand. He was a home-builder already.

Sam had paid no heed to the work. But, wondering what Mamise was looking at, he turned and saw his brother. A

grin stretched his mouth. Little Brother grew anxious. He knew that when something he had builded interested Sam its doom was close.

"Whass 'at?" said Sam.

"None yer business," said Little Brother, as spunky as Belgium before the Kaiser.

"'S'ouse, ain't it?"

"You lea' me 'lone, now!"

"Where d'you git it at?"

"I built it."

"Gimme't!"

"You build you one for your own self now."

"'At one's good enough for me."

"Maw! You make Sam lea' my youse alone."

Mrs. Nuddle moaned: "Sammie, don't bother Little Brother now. You go on about your own business."

Smash! splash! Sam had kicked the house into ruins with the side of his foot.

Mamise was so angry that before she knew it she had darted at him and smacked him with violence. Instantly she was ashamed of herself. Sam began to rub his face and yowl:

"Maw, she gimme a swipe in the snoot! She hurt me, so she did."

Mamise was disgusted. Abbie appeared at the door equally disgusted; it was intolerable that any one should slap her children but herself. She had accepted too much of Mamise's money to be very indignant, but she did rise to a wail:

"Seems to me, Mamise, you might keep your hands off my childern."

"I'm sorry. I forgot myself. But Sam is so like his father I just couldn't help taking a whack at him. The little bully knocked over his brother's house just to hear it fall. When he grows up he'll be just as much of a nuisance as Jake and he'll call it syndicalism or internationalism or something, just as Jake does."

Jake came in on the scene. He brought home his black eye and a white story.

When Abbie gasped, "What on earth's the matter?" he growled: "I bumped into a girder. Whatya s'pose?"

Abbie accepted the eye as a fact and the story as a fiction,

but she knew that, however Jake stood in the yard, as a pugilist he was the home champion.

She called Little Sister to bring from the ice-box a slice of the steak she had bought for dinner. On the high wages Jake was earning—or at least receiving—the family was eating high.

Little Sister told her brother Sam, "It's a shame to waste good meat on his old black lamp." And Sam's regret was, "I wisht I'd 'a' gave it to um."

Little Sister knew better than to let her father hear any of this, but it was only another cruel evidence that great lovers of the public welfare are apt to be harshly regarded at home. It is too much to expect that one who tenderly considers mankind in the mass should have time to be kind to them in particular.

Jake was not even appreciated by Mamise, whom he did appreciate. Every time he praised her looks or her swell clothes she acted as if he made her mad.

To-night when he found her at the house her first gush of anxiety for him was followed by a remark of singular heartlessness:

"But, oh, did you hear of the destruction of the *Clara*?"

"Yes, I heard of the destruction of the *Clara*," he echoed, with a sneer. "If I had my way the whole rotten fleet would follow her to the bottom of the ocean!"

"Why, Jake!" was Abbie's best.

Jake went on: "And it will, too, or I'm a liar. The Germans will get them boats as fast as they build 'em." He laughed. "I tell you them Kaiser-boys just eats ships."

"But how were they able to destroy the *Clara*?" Mamise demanded.

"Easiest thing you know. When she laid up at Norfolk they just put a bomb into her."

"But how did they know she was going to Norfolk to load?"

"Oh, we—they have ways."

The little slip from "we" to "they" caught Mamise's ear. Her first intuition of its meaning was right, and out of her amazement the first words that leaped were:

"Poor Abbie!"

Thought, like lightning, breaks through the air in a quick slash from cloud to ground. Mamise's whole thought was

from zig to zag in some such procedure as this, but infinitely swift.

"We—they? That means that Jake considers himself a part of the German organization for destruction, the will to ruin. That means that Jake must have been involved in the wreck of the *Clara*. That means that he deliberately connived at a crime against his country. That means that he is a traitor as well as a murderer. That means that my sister is the wife of a fiend. Poor Abbie!"

This thought stunned and blinded Mamise a long moment. She heard Jake grumbling:

"What ya mean—'poor Abbie!'?"

Mamise was afraid to say. She cast one glance at Jake, and the lightning of understanding struck him. He realized what she was thinking—or at least he suspected it, because he was thinking of his own past. He was realizing that he had met Nicky Easton through Mamise, though Mamise did not know this—that is, he hoped she did not. And yet perhaps she did.

And now Mamise and Jake were mutually afraid of each other. Abbie was altogether in the dark, and a little jealous of Mamise and her peculiar secrets, but her general mood was one of stolid thoughtlessness.

Jake, suspecting Mamise's suspicion of him, was moved to justify himself by one of his tirades against society in general. Abbie, who had about as much confidence in the world as an old rabbit in a doggy country, had heard Jake thunder so often that his denunciations had become as vaguely lulling as a continual surf. Generalizations meant nothing to her bovine soul. She was thinking of something else, usually, throughout all the fiery Jakiads. While he indicted whole nations and denounced all success as a crime against unsuccess she was hunting through her work-basket for a good thread to patch Sam's pants with.

Abbie was unmoved, but Mamise was appalled. It was her first encounter with the abysmal hatred of which some of these loud lovers of mankind are capable. Jake's theories had been merely absurd or annoying before, but now they grew monstrous, for they seemed to be confirmed by an actual crime.

Mamise felt that she must escape from the presence of

Jake or attack him. She despised him too well to argue with him, and she rose to go.

Abbie pleaded with her in vain to stay to supper. She would not be persuaded. She walked to her own bungalow and cooked herself a little meal of her own. She felt stained once more with vicarious guilt, and wondered what she had done so to be pursued and lassoed by the crimes of others.

She remembered that she had lost her chance to clear herself of Sir Joseph Webling's guilt by keeping his secret. If she had gone to the British authorities with her first suspicion of Sir Joseph and Nicky Easton she would have escaped from sharing their guilt. She would have been branded as an informer, but only by the conspirators; and Sir Joseph himself and Lady Webling might have been saved from self-destruction.

Now she was in the same situation almost exactly. Again she had only suspicion for her guide. But in England she had been a foreigner and Sir Joseph was her benefactor. Here she was in her own country, and she owed nothing to Jake Nuddle, who was a low brute, as ruthless to his wife as to his flag.

It came to Mamise with a sharp suddenness that her one clear duty was to tell Davidge what she knew about Jake. It was not a pretty duty, but it was a definite. She resolved that the first thing she did in the morning would be to go to Davidge with what facts she had. The resolution brought her peace, and she sat down to her meager supper with a sense of pleasant righteousness.

Mamise felt so redeemed that she took up a novel, lighted a cigarette, and sat down by her lamp to pass a well-earned evening of spinsterial respectability. Then the door opened and Abbie walked in. Abbie did not think it sisterly to knock. She paused to register her formal protest against Mamise's wicked addiction to tobacco.

"I must say, Mamise, I do wisht you'd break yourself of that horbul habbut."

Mamise laughed tolerantly. "You were cooking cabbage when I was at your house. Why can't I cook this vegetable?"

"But I wa'n't cooking the cabbage in my face."

"You were cooking it in mine. But let's not argue about botany or ethics."

Abbie was not aware of mentioning either of those things, but she had other matters to discuss. She dropped into a chair, sighing:

"Jake's went out to telephone, and I thought I'd just run over for a few words. You see, I—"

"Where was Jake telephoning?"

"I d'know. He's always long-distancin' somebody. But what I come for—"

"Doesn't it ever occur to you to wonder?"

"Long as it ain't some woman—or if it is, as long as it's long distance—why should I worry my head about it? The thing I wanted to speak of is—"

"Didn't it rather make your blood run cold to hear Jake speak as he did of the lost ship?"

"Oh, I'm so used to his rantin' it goes in one ear and out the other."

"You'd better keep a little of it in your brain. I'm worried about your husband, even if you're not, Abbie dear."

"What call you got to worry?"

"I have a ghastly feeling that my brother-in-law is mixed up in the sinking of the *Clara*."

"Don't be foolish!"

"I'm trying not to be. But do you remember the night I told you both that the *Clara* was going to Norfolk to take on her cargo? Well, he went out to get cigars, though he had a lot, and he let it slip that he had been talking on the long-distance telephone. When the *Clara* is sunk, he is not surprised. He says, 'We—they have ways.' He prophesies the sinking of all the ships Mr. Davidge—"

Abbie seized this name as a weapon of self-defense and mate-defense.

"Oh, you're speakin' for Mr. Davidge now."

"Perhaps. He's my employer, and Jake's, too. I feel under some obligations to him, even though Jake doesn't. I feel some obligations to the United States, and Jake doesn't. I distrust and abhor Germany, and Jake likes her as well as he does us. The background is perfect. When such crimes are being done as Germany keeps doing, condoning them is as bad as committing them."

"Big words!" sniffed Abbie. "Can't you talk United States?"

"All right, my dear. I say that since Jake is glad the *Clara* was sunk and hopes that more ships will be sunk, he is as bad as the men that sank her. And what's more, I have made up my mind that Jake helped to sink her, and that he works in this yard simply for a chance to sink more ships. Do you get those words of one syllable?"

"No," said Abbie. Ideas of one syllable are as hard to grasp as words of many. "I don't know what you're drivin' at a tall."

"Poor Abbie!" sighed Mamise. "Dream on, if you want to. But I'm going to tell Mr. Davidge to keep a watch on Jake. I'm going to warn him that Jake is probably mixed up in the sinking of that beautiful ship he named after his mother."

Even Abbie could not miss the frightful meaning of this. She was one of those who never trust experience, one of those who think that, in spite of all the horrible facts of the past, horrible things are impossible in the future. Higher types of the same mind had gone about saying that war was impossible, later insisting that it was impossible that the United States should be dragged into this war because it was so horrible, and next averring that since this war was so horrible there could never be another.

Even Abbie could imagine what would happen if Mamise denounced Jake as an accomplice in the sinking of the *Clara*. It would be so terrible that it must be impossible. The proof that Jake was innocent was the thought of what would happen to him and to her and their children if he were found guilty. She summed it all up in a phrase:

"Mamise, you're plumb crazy!"

"I hope so, but I'm also crazy enough to put Mr. Davidge on his guard."

"And have him fire Jake, or get him arrested?"

"Perhaps."

"Ain't you got any sense of decency or dooty a tall?"

"I'm trying to find out."

"Well, I always knew a woman who'd smoke cigarettes would do anything."

"I'll do this."

"O' course you won't; but if you did, I'd—why, I'd—why, I just don't know what I'd do."

"Would you give up Jake?"

"Give up Jake? Divorce him or something?"

Mamise nodded.

Abbie gasped: "Why, you're positively immor'l! Posi*tive*-ly! He's the father of my childern! I'll stick to Jake through thick and thin."

"Through treason and murder, too? You were an American, you know, before you ever met him. And I was an American before he became my brother-in-law. And I don't intend to let him make me a partner in his guilt just because he made you give him a few children."

"I won't listen to another word," cried Abbie. "You're too indecent to talk to." And she slammed the door after her.

"Poor Abbie!" said Mamise, and closed her book, rubbed the light out of her cigarette, and went to bed.

But not to sleep. Abbie had not argued well, but sometimes that is best for the arguments, for then the judge becomes their attorney. Mamise tossed on a grid of perplexities. Neither her mind nor her body could find comfort.

She rose early to escape her thoughts. It was a cold, raw morning, and Abbie came dashing through the drizzle with her shawl over her head and her cheeks besprent with tears and rain. She flung herself on Mamise and sobbed:

"I ain't slep' a wink all night. I been thinkin' of Jake and the childern. I was mad at you last night, but I'm sorry for what I said. You're my own sister—all I got in the world besides the three childern. And I'm all you got, and I know it ain't in you to go and send the father o' my childern to jail and ruin my life. I've had a hard life, and so've you, Mamise honey, but we got to be friends and love one another, for we're all that's left of our fambly, and it couldn't be that one sister would drive the other to distraction and drag the family name in the mud. It couldn't be, could it, Mamise? Tell me you was only teasin' me! I didn't mean what I said last night about you bein' indecent, and you didn't mean what you said about Jake, did you, Mamise? Say you didn't, or I'll just die right here."

She had left the door open, and a gust of windy rain came lashing in. The world outside was cold and wet, and Abbie was warm and afraid and irresistibly pitiful.

Mamise could only hug and kiss her and say:

"I'll see! I'll see!"

When people do not know what their chief mysteries, themselves, will do they say, "I'll see."

Mamise thought of Davidge, and she could not promise to leave him in ignorance of the menace imminent above him. But when at last she tore herself from Abbie's clutching hands and hurried away to the office she looked back and saw Abbie out in the rain, staring after her in terror and shaking her head helplessly. She could not promise herself that she would tell Davidge.

CHAPTER VII

SHE reached the office late in spite of her early start. Davidge had gone. He had gone to Pittsburgh to try to plead for more steel for more ships.

The head clerk told her this. He was in an ugly mood, sarcastic about Mamise's tardiness, and bitter with the knowledge that all the work of building another *Clara* had to be carried through with its endless detail and the chance of the same futility. He was as sick about it as a Carlyle who must rewrite a burned-up history, an Audubon who must repaint all his pictures.

Davidge had left no good-by for Mamise. This hurt her. She wished that she had stopped to tell him good night the afternoon before.

In his prolonged absence Mamise wondered if he were really in Pittsburgh or in Washington with Lady Clifton-Wyatt. She experienced the first luxury of jealousy; it was aggravated by alarm. She was left alone, a prey to the appeals of Abbie, who could not persuade her to promise silence.

But the next night Jake was gone. Abbie explained that he had been called out of town to a meeting of a committee of his benevolent insurance order. Mamise wondered and surmised.

Jake went to meet Nicky Easton and claim his pay for his share in the elimination of the *Clara*. Nicky paid him so handsomely that Jake lost his head and imagined himself already a millionaire. Strangely, he did not at once set about dividing his wealth among his beloved "protelariat." He made a royal progress from saloon to saloon, growing more and more haughty, and pounding on successive bars with a vigor that increased as his articulation effervesced. His secret would probably have bubbled out of him if he had not been so offensive that he was bounced out of every barroom before he had time to get to the explanation of his wealth. In one

"poor man's club" he fell asleep and rolled off his chair to a comfortable berth among the spittoons.

Next morning Jake woke up with his head swollen and his purse vanished. He sought out Nicky and demanded another fee. Nicky laughed at his claim; but Jake grew threatening, and Nicky was frightened into offering him a chance to win another fortune by sinking another ship. He staked Jake to the fare for his return and promised to motor down some dark night and confer with him. Jake rolled home in state.

On the same train went a much interested sleuth who detached himself from the entourage of Nicky and picked up Jake.

Jake had attracted some attention when he first met Nicky in Washington, but the sadly overworked Department of Justice could not provide a squad of escorts for every German or pro-German suspect. Before the war was over the secret army under Mr. Bielaski reached a total of two hundred and fifty thousand, but the number of suspects reached into the millions. From Nicky Easton alone a dozen activities radiated; and studying him and his communicants was a slow and complex task.

Mr. Larrey decided that the best way to get a line on Jake would be to take a job alongside him and "watch his work." It was the easiest thing in the world to get a job at Davidge's shipyard; and it was another of the easiest things in the world to meet Jake, for Jake was eager to meet workmen, particularly workmen like Larrey, who would listen to reason, and take an interest in the gentle art of slowing up production. Larrey was all for sabotage.

One evening Jake invited him to his house for further development. On that evening Mamise dropped in. She did not recognize Larrey, but he remembered her perfectly.

He could hardly believe his camera eyes at first when he saw the great Miss Webling enter a workman's shanty and accept Jake Nuddle's introduction:

"Larrey, old scout, this is me sister-in-law. Mamise, shake hands with me pal Larrey."

Larrey had been the first of her shadows in New York, but had been called off when she proved unprofitable and before she met Easton. And now he found her at work in a shipyard where strange things were happening! He was all afire

with the covey of spies he had flushed. His first impulse was to shoot off a wire in code to announce his discovery. Then he decided to work this gold-mine himself. It would be pleasanter to cultivate this pretty woman than Jake Nuddle, and she would probably fall for him like a thousand of brick. But when he invited himself to call on her her snub fell on him like a thousand of brick. She would not let him see her home, and he was furious till Jake explained, "She's sweet on the boss."

Larrey decided that he had better call on Davidge and tip him off to the past of his stenographer and get him to place her under observation.

The next day Davidge came back from his protracted journey. He had fought a winning battle for an allotment of steel. He was boyish with the renewal of battle ardor, and boyish in his greeting of Mamise. He made no bones of greeting her before all the clerks with a horribly embarrassing enthusiasm:

"Lord! but I've been homesick to see you!"

Miss Gabus was disgusted. Mamise was silly with confusion.

Those people who are always afraid of new customs have dreaded public life for women lest it should destroy modesty and rob them of the protection of guardians, duennas, and chaperons. But the world seems to have to have a certain amount of decency to get along on, at all, and provides for it among humans about as well as it provides for the protection of other plants and animals, letting many suffer and perish and some prosper.

The anxious conservatives who are always risking their own souls in spasms of anxiety over other people's souls would have given up Mamise and Davidge for lost, since she lived alone and he was an unattached bachelor. But curiously enough, their characters chaperoned them, their jobs and ambitions excited and fatigued them, and their moods of temptation either did not coincide or were frustrated by circumstances and crowds.

Each knew well what it was to suffer an onset of desperate emotion, of longing, of reckless, helpless adoration. But in office hours these anguishes were as futile as prayers for the

moon. Outside of office hours there were other obstacles, embarrassments, interferences.

These protections and ambitions would not suffice forever, any more than a mother's vigilance, maidenly timidity, convent walls or *yashmaks* will infallibly prevail. But they managed to kill a good deal of time—and very dolefully.

Mamise was in peculiar peril now. She was beginning to feel very sorry for herself, and even sorrier for Davidge. She remembered how cruelly he had been bludgeoned by the news of the destruction of his first ship, and she kept remembering the wild, sweet pangs of her sympathy, the strange ecstasy of entering into the grief of another. She remembered how she had seized his shoulders and how their hands had wrestled together in a common anguish. The remembrance of that communion came back to her in flashes of feverish demand for a renewal of union, for a consummation of it, indeed. She was human, and nothing human was alien to her.

Davidge had spoken of marriage—had told her that he was a candidate for her husbandcy. She had laughed at him then, for her heart had been full of the new wine of ambition. Like other wines, it had its morning after when all that had been so alluring looked to be folly. Her own loneliness told her that Davidge was lonely, and that two lonelinesses combined would make a festival, as two negatives an affirmative.

When Davidge came back from his trip the joy in his eyes at sight of her kindled her smoldering to flame. She would have been glad if he had snatched her to his breast and crushed her there. She had that womanly longing to be crushed, and he the man's to crush. But fate provided a sentinel. Miss Gabus was looking on; the office force stood by, and the day's work was waiting to be done.

Davidge went to his desk tremulous; Mamise to her typewriter. She hammered out a devil's tattoo on it, and he devoured estimates and commercial correspondence, while an aromatic haze enveloped them both as truly as if they had been faun and nymph in a bosky glade.

Miss Gabus played Mrs. Grundy all morning and at the noon hour made a noble effort to rescue Mamise from any opportunity to cast an evil spell over poor Mr. Davidge. Women have a wonderful pity for men that other women cultivate! Yet all that Miss Gabus said to Miss Webling was:

"Goin' to lunch now, Mi' Swebling?"

And all that Miss Webling said was:

"Not just yet—thank you."

Both were almost swooning with the tremendous significance of the moment.

Miss Webling felt that she was defying all the powers of espionage and convention when she made so brave as to linger while Miss Gabus left the room in short twitches, with the painful reluctance of one who pulls off an adhesive plaster by degrees. When at last she was really off, Miss Webling went to Davidge's door, feeling as wicked as the maid in Ophelia's song, though she said no more than:

"Well, did you have a successful journey?"

Davidge whirled in his chair.

"Bully! Sit down, won't you?"

He thought that no goddess had ever done so divine a thing so ambrosially as she when she smiled and shook her incredibly exquisite head. He rose to his feet in awe of her. His restless hands, afraid to lay hold of their quarry, automatically extracted his watch from his pocket and held it beneath his eyes. He stared at it without recognizing the hour, and stammered:

"Will you lunch with me?"

"No, thank you!"

This jolted an "Oh!" out of him. Then he came back with:

"When am I going to get a chance to talk to you?"

"You know my address."

"Yes, but—" He thought of that horrible evening when he had marched through the double row of staring cottages. But he was determined. "Going to be home this evening?"

"By some strange accident—yes."

"By some strange accident, I might drop round."

"Do."

They laughed idiotically, and she turned and glided out.

She went to the mess-hall and moved about, selecting her dishes. Pretending not to see that Miss Gabus was pretending not to see her, she took her collation to another table and ate with the relish of a sense of secret guilt—the guilt of a young woman secretly betrothed.

Davidge kept away from the office most of the afternoon because Mamise was so intolerably sweet and so tantalizingly

unapproachable. He made a pretext of inspecting the works. She had a sugary suspicion of his motive, and munched it with strange comfort.

What might have happened if Davidge had called on her in her then mood and his could easily be guessed. But there are usually interventions. The chaperon this time was Mr. Larrey, the operative of the Department of Justice. He also had his secret.

He arrived at Davidge's home just as Davidge finished the composition of his third lawn tie and came down-stairs to go. When he saw Larrey he was a trifle curt with his visitor. Thinking him a workman and probably an ambassador from one of the unions on the usual mission of such ambassadors —more pay, less hours, or the discharge of some unorganized laborer—Davidge said:

"Better come round to the office in the morning."

"I can't come to your office," said Larrey.

"Why not? It's open to everybody."

"Yeh, but I can't afford to be seen goin' there."

"Good Lord! Isn't it respectable enough for you?"

"Yeh, but—well, I think it's my duty to tip you off to a little slick work that's goin' on in your establishment."

"Won't it keep till to-morrow evening?"

"Yeh—I guess so. It's only one of your stenographers."

This checked Davidge. By a quaint coincidence he was about to call on one of his stenographers. Larrey amended his first statement: "Leastways, I'll say she calls herself a stenographer. But that's only her little camouflage. She's not on the level."

Davidge realized that the stenographer he was wooing was not on the level. She was in the clouds. But his curiosity was piqued. He motioned Larrey to a chair and took another.

"Shoot," he said.

"Well, it's this Miss Webling. Know anything about her?"

"Something," said Davidge. He was too much amused to be angry. He thought that Larrey was another of those amateur detectives who flattered Germany by crediting her with an omnipresence in evil. He was a faithful reader of Ellis Parker Butler's famous sleuth, and he grinned at Larrey. "Well, Mr. Philo Gubb, go on. Your story interests me."

Larrey reddened. He spoke earnestly, explained who he

was, showed his credentials, and told what he knew of Miss Webling. He added what he imagined Davidge knew.

Davidge found the whole thing too preposterous to be insolent. His chivalry in Mamise's behalf was not aroused, because he thought that the incident would make a good story to tell her. He drew Larrey out by affecting amazed incredulity.

Larrey explained: "She's an old friend of ours. We got the word from the British to pick the lady up when she first landed in this country. She was too slick for us, I guess, because we never got the goods on her. We gave her up after a couple of weeks. Then her trail crossed Nicky Easton's once more."

"And who is Nicky Easton?"

"He's a German agent she knew in London—great friend of her adopted father's. The British nabbed him once, but he split on the gang, and they let him off. Whilst I was trailin' him I ran into a feller named Nuddle—he come up to see Easton. I followed him here, and lo and behold! Miss Webling turns up, too! And passin' herself off for Nuddle's sister-in-law! Nuddle's a bad actor, but she's worse. And she pretends to be a poor workin'-girl. Cheese! You should have seen her in New York all dolled up!"

Davidge ignored the opportunity to say that he had had the privilege of seeing Miss Webling all dolled up. He knew why Mamise was living as she did. It was a combination of lark and crusade. He nursed Larrey's story along, and asked with patient amusement:

"What's your theory as to her reason for playing such a game?"

He smiled as he said this, but sobered abruptly when Larrey explained:

"You lost a ship not long ago, didn't you? You got other ships on the ways, ain't you? Well, I don't need to tell you it's good business for the Huns to slow up or blow up all the ships they can. Every boat they stop cuts down the supplies of the Allies just so much. This Miss Webling's adopted father was in on the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and this girl was, too, probably. She carried messages between old Webling and Easton, and walked right into a little trap the British laid for her. She put up a strong fight, and, being an

American, was let go. But her record got to this country before she did. You ask me what she's up to. Well, what should she be up to but the Kaiser's work? She's no stenographer, and she wouldn't be here playin' tunes on a typewriter unless she had some good business reason. Well, her business is—she's a ship-wrecker."

The charge was ridiculous, yet there were confirmations or seeming confirmations of it. The mere name of Nicky Easton was a thorn in Davidge's soul. He remembered Easton in London at Mamise's elbow, and in Washington pursuing her car and calling her "Mees Vapelink."

Davidge promised Larrey that he would look into the matter, and bade him good night with mingled respect and fear.

When he set out at length to call on Mamise he was grievously troubled lest he had lost his heart to a clever adventuress. He despised his suspicions, and yet—somebody had destroyed his ship. He remembered how shocked she had been by the news. Yet what else could the worst spy do but pretend to be deeply worried? Davidge had never liked Jake Nuddle, Mamise's alleged relationship by marriage did not gain plausibility on reconsideration. The whim to live in a workman's cottage was even less convincing.

Mr. Larrey had spoiled Davidge's blissful mood and his lover's program for the evening. Davidge moved slowly toward Mamise's cottage, not as a suitor, but as a student.

Larrey shadowed him from force of habit, and saw him going with reluctant feet, pausing now and then, irresolute. Davidge was thinking hard, calling himself a fool, now for trusting Mamise and now for listening to Larrey. To suspect Mamise was to be a traitor to his love: not to suspect her was to be a traitor to his common sense and to his beloved career.

And the Mamise that awaited the belated Davidge was also in a state of tangled wits. She, too, had dressed with a finikin care, as Davidge had, neither of them stopping to think how quaint a custom it is for people who know each other well and see each other in plain clothes every day to get themselves up with meticulous skill in the evening like Christmas parcels for each other's examination. Nature dresses the birds in the mating season. Mankind with the

aid of the dressmaker and the haberdasher plumes up at will.

But as Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles I his Cromwell, and Davidge his Larrey, so Mamise had her sister Abbie.

Abbie came in unexpectedly and regarded Mamise's costume with no illusions except her own cynical ones:

"What you all diked up about?"

Mamise shrugged her eyebrows, her lips, and her shoulders.

Abbie guessed. "That man comin'?"

Mamise repeated her previous business.

"Kind of low neck, don't you think? And your arms nekked."

Mamise drew over her arms a scarf that gave them color rather than concealment. Abbie scorned the subterfuge.

"Do you think it's proper to dress like that for a man to come callin'?"

"I did think so till you spoke," snapped Mamise in all the bitterness of the ancient feud between loveliness unashamed and unlovely shame.

Abbie felt unwelcome. "Well, I just dropped over because Jake's went out to some kind of meetin'."

"With whom? Where?"

"Oh, some of the workmen—a lot of soreheads lookin' for more wages."

Mamise was indignant: "The soldiers get thirty dollars a month on a twenty-four-hour, seven-day shift. Jake gets more than that a week for loafing round the shop about seven hours a day. How on earth did you ever tie yourself up to such a rotten bounder?"

Abbie longed for a hot retort, but was merely peevish:

"Well, I ain't seen you marryin' anything better. I guess I'll go home. I don't seem to be wanted here."

This was one of those exact truths that decent people must immediately deny. Mamise put her arms about Abbie and said:

"Forgive me, dear—I'm a beast. But Jake is such a—" She felt Abbie wriggling ominously and changed to: "He's so unworthy of you. These are such terrible times, and the world is in such horrible need of everybody's help and especially of ships. It breaks my heart to see anybody wasting his time and strength interfering with the builders instead of

joining them. It's like interfering with the soldiers. It's a kind of treason. And besides, he does so little for you and the children."

This last Abbie was willing to admit. She shed a few tears of self-esteem, but she simply could not rise to the heights of suffering for anything as abstract as a cause or a nation or a world. She was like so many of the air-ships the United States was building then: she could not be induced to leave the ground or, if she got up, to glide back safely.

She tried now to love her country, but she hardly rose before she fell.

"Oh, I know it's tur'ble what folks are sufferin', but—well, the Lord's will be done, I say."

"And I say it's mainly the devil's will that's being done!" said Mamise.

This terrified Abbie. "I wisht you'd be a little careful of your language, Mamise. Swearin' and cigarettes both is pretty much of a load for a lady to git by with."

"O Lord!" sighed Mamise, in despair. She was capable of long, high flights, but she could not carry such a passenger.

Abbie continued: "And do you think it's right, seein' men here all by yourself?"

"I'm not seeing men—but a man."

"But all by yourself."

"I'm not all by myself when he's here."

"You'll get the neighbors talkin'—you'll see!"

"A lot I care for their talk!"

"Why don't you marry him and settle down respectable and have childern and—"

"Why don't you go home and take care of your own?"

"I guess I better." And she departed forthwith.

CHAPTER VIII

THE two sisters had managed to fray each other's nerves raw. The mere fact that Abbie advocated marriage and maternity threw Mamise into a cantankerous distaste for her own dreams.

Larrey had delayed Davidge long enough for Mamise to be rid of Abbie, but the influence of both Larrey and Abbie was manifest in the strained greetings of the caller and the callee. Instead of the eagerness to rush into each other's arms that both had felt in the morning, Davidge entered Mamise's presence with one thought dominant: "Is she really a spy? I must be on my guard." And Mamise was thinking, "If he should be thinking what Abbie thought, how odious!"

Thus once more their moods chaperoned them. Love could not attune them. She sat; he sat. When their glances met they parted at once.

She mistook his uncertainty for despondency. She assumed that he was brooding over his lost ship. Out of a long silence she spoke:

"I wonder if the world will ever forget and forgive?"

"Forget and forgive who—whom, for what?"

"Germany for all she's done to this poor world—Belgium, the *Lusitania*, the *Clara*?"

He smiled sadly. "The *Clara* was a little slow tub compared to the *Lusitania*, but she meant a lot to me."

"And to me. So did the *Lusitania*. She nearly cost me my life."

He was startled. "You didn't plan to sail on her?"

"No, but—" She paused. She had not meant to open this subject.

But he was aching to hear her version of what Larrey had told.

"How do you mean—she nearly cost you your life?"

"Oh, that's one of the dark chapters of my past."

"You never told me about it."

"I'd rather not."

"Please!" He said it with a surprising earnestness. He had a sudden hope that her confession might be an absolving explanation.

She could not fathom this eagerness, but she felt a desire to release that old secret. She began, recklessly:

"Well, I told you how I ran away from home and went on the stage, and Sir Joseph Webling—"

"You told me that much, but not what happened before you met him."

"No, I didn't tell you that, and I'm not going to now, but—well, Sir Joseph was like a father to me; I never had one of my own—to know and remember. Sir Joseph was German born, and perhaps the ruthlessness was contagious, for he—well, I can't tell you."

"Please!"

"I swore not to."

"You gave your oath to a German?"

"No, to an English officer in the Secret Service. I'm always forgetting and starting to tell."

"Why did you take your oath?"

"I traded secrecy for freedom."

"You mean you turned state's evidence?"

"Oh no, I didn't tell on them. I didn't know what they were up to when they used me for— But I'm skidding now. I want to tell you—terribly. But I simply must not. I made an awful mistake that night at Mrs. Prothero's in pretending to be ill."

"You only pretended?"

"Yes, to get you away. You see, Lady Clifton-Wyatt got after me, accused me of being a spy, of carrying messages that resulted in the sinking of ships and the killing of men. She said that the police came to our house, and Sir Joseph tried to kill one of them and killed his own wife and then was shot by an officer and that they gave out the story that Sir Joseph and Lady Webling died of ptomaine poisoning. She said Nicky Easton was shot in the Tower. Oh, an awful story she told, and I was afraid she'd tell you, so I spirited you away on the pretext of illness."

Davidge was astounded at this confirmation of Larrey's story. He said:

"But it wasn't true what Lady C.-W. told?"

"Most of it was false, but it was fiction founded on fact, and I couldn't explain it without breaking my oath. And now I've pretty nearly broken it, after all. I've sprained it badly."

"Don't you want to go on and—finish it off?"

"I want to—oh, how I want to! but I've got to save a few shreds of respectability. I kidnapped you the day you were going to tea with Lady C.-W. to keep you from her. I wish now I'd let you go. Then you'd have known the worst of me—or worse than the worst."

She turned a harrowed glance his way, and saw, to her bewilderment, that he was smiling broadly. Then he seized her hands and felt a need to gather her home to his arms.

She was so amazed that she fell back to stare at him. Studying his radiant face, she somehow guessed that he had known part of her story before and was glad to hear her confess it, but her intuition missed fire when she guessed at the source of his information.

"You have been talking to Lady Clifton-Wyatt, after all!"

"Not since I saw her with you."

"Then who told you?"

He laughed now, for it pleased him mightily to have her read his heart so true.

"The main thing is that you told me. And now once more I ask you: will you marry me?"

This startled her indeed. She startled him no less by her brusquerie:

"Certainly not."

"And why not?"

"I'll marry no man who is so careless whom he marries as you are."

CHAPTER IX

THE whimsical solemnity of this made him roar. But a man does not love a woman the less for being feminine, and when she thwarts him by a womanliness she delights him excruciatingly.

But Mamise was in earnest. She believed in one emotion at a time. It offended her to have Davidge suggest that the funeral baked meats of her tragedy should coldly furnish forth a wedding breakfast. She wanted to revel awhile in her elegiac humor and pay full honor to her sorrow, full penalty for her guilt. She put aside his amorous impatience and returned to her theme.

"Well, after all the evil I have done, I wanted to make some atonement. I was involved in the sinking of I don't know how many ships, and I wanted to take some part in building others. So when I met you and you told me that women could build ships, too, you wakened a great hope in me, and an ambition. I wanted to get out in the yards and swing a sledge or drive a riveting-gun."

"With those hands?" He laughed and reached for them.

She put them out of sight back of her as one removes dangerous toys from the clutch of a child, and went on:

"But you wouldn't let me. So I took up the next best thing, office work. I studied that hateful stenography and learned to play a typewriter."

"It keeps you nearer to me."

"But I don't want to be near you. I want to build ships. Please let me go out in the yard. Please give me a real job."

He could not keep from laughing at her, at such delicacy pleading for such toil. His amusement humiliated her and baffled her so that at length she said:

"Please go on home. It's getting late, and I don't like you at all."

"I know you don't like me, but couldn't you love me?"

"That's more impossible than liking you, since you won't let me have my only wish."

"It's too brutal, I tell you. And it's getting too cold. It would simply ruin your perfect skin. I don't want to marry a longshoreman, thank you."

"Then I'll thank you to go on home. I'm tired out. I've got to get up in the morning at the screech of dawn and take up your ghastly drudgery again."

"If you'll marry me you won't have to work at all."

"But work is the one thing I want. So if you'll kindly take yourself off I'll be much obliged. You've no business here, anyway, and it's getting so late that you'll have all the neighbors talking."

"A lot I care!"

"Well, I care a lot," she said, blandly belying her words to Abbie. "I've got to live among them."

It was a miserable ending to an evening of such promise. He felt as sheepish as a cub turned out of his best girl's house by a sleepy parent, but he had no choice. He rose drearily, fought his way into his overcoat, and growled:

"Good night!"

She sighed "Good night!" and wished that she were not so cantankerous. The closing of the door shook her whole frame, and she made a step forward to call him back, but sank into a chair instead, worn out with the general unsatisfactoriness of life, the complicated mathematical problem that never comes out even. Marriage is a circle that cannot be quite squared.

She sat droopily in her chair for a long while, pondering mankind and womankind and their mutual dependence and incompatibility. It would be nice to be married if one could stay single at the same time. But it was hopelessly impossible to eat your cake and have it, too.

Abbie, watching from her window and not knowing that Davidge had gone, imagined all sorts of things and wished that her wild sister would marry and settle down. And yet she wished that she herself had stayed single, for the children were a torment, and of her husband she could only say that she did not know whether he bothered her the more when he was away or when he was at home.

When Davidge left Mamise he looked back at the lonely

cottage she stubbornly and miserably occupied and longed to hale her from it into a palace. As he walked home his heart warmed to all the little cottages, most of them dark and cheerless, and he longed to change all these to palaces, too. He felt sorry for the poor, tired people that lived so humbly there and slept now but to rise in the morning to begin moiling again.

Sometimes from his office window he surveyed the long lines at the pay-windows and felt proud that he could pour so much treasure into the hands of the poor. If he had not schemed and borrowed and organized they would not have had their wages at all.

But now he wished that there might be no poor and no wages, but everybody palaced and living on money from home. That seemed to be the idea, too, of his more discontented working-men, but he could not imagine how everybody could have a palace and everybody live at ease. Who was to build the palaces? Who was to cut the marble from the mountains and haul it, and who to dig the foundations and blast the steel and fasten the girders together? It was easy for the dreamers and the literary loafers and the irresponsible cartoonists to denounce the capitalists and draw pictures of them as obese swine wallowing in bags of gold while emaciated children put out their lean hands in vain. But cartoons were not construction, and the men who would revolutionize the world could not, as a rule, keep their own books straight.

Material riches were everywhere, provided one had the mental riches to go out and get them. Davidge had been as poor as the poorest man at his works, but he had sold muscle for money and brains for money. He had dreamed and schemed and drawn up tremendous plans while they took their pay and went home to their evenings of repose in the bosoms of their families or the barrooms of idleness.

Still there was no convincing them of the realization that they could not get capital by slandering capitalists, or ease by ease, but only by sweat. And so everybody was saying that as soon as this great war was over a greater war was coming upon the world. He wondered what could be done to stay that universal fury from destroying utterly all that the German horror might spare.

Thinking of such things, he forgot, for the nonce, the pangs of love.

BOOK V

IN WASHINGTON

How quaint a custom it is for people who know each other well and see each other in plain clothes every day to get themselves up with meticulous skill in the evening like Christmas parcels for each other's examination.

CHAPTER I

THE threat of winter was terrifying the long-suffering world. People thought of the gales that would harass the poor souls in the clammy trenches, the icy winds that would flutter the tents of the men in camps, the sleety storms that would lash the workers on the docks and on the decks of ships and in the shipyards; the final relentless persecution of the refugees, crowded upon the towns that had not enough for themselves.

To be cold when one is despondent is a fearsome thing. Mamise woke in the chill little cottage and had to leap from her snug bed to a cold bathroom, come out chattering to a cold kitchen. Just as her house grew a little warm, she had to leave it for a long, windy walk to an office not half warm enough.

The air was full of orphan leaves, and Cossack whirlwinds stampeded them down the roads as ruthlessly as Uhlans herding Belgian fugitives along. The dour autumn seemed to wrench hopes from the heart like shriveled leaves, and to fill the air with swirling discouragements. The men at work about the ships were numb and often stopped to blow upon their aching fingers. The red-hot rivets went in showers that threatened to blister, but gave no warmth.

The ambitions of Mamise congealed along with the other stirring things. She was sorely tempted to give up the unwomanly battle and accept Davidge's offer of a wedding-ring. She had, of course, her Webling inheritance to fall back upon, but she had come to hate it so as tainted money that she would not touch it or its interest. She put it all into Liberty Bonds and gave a good many of those to various charities. Not the least of her delights in her new career had been her emancipation from slavery to the money Mr. Verrinder had spoken of as her wages for aiding Sir Joseph Webling.

A marriage with Davidge was an altogether different slavery, a thoroughly patriotic livelihood. It would permit her to have servants to wait on her and build her fires. She would go out only when she wished, and sleep late of mornings. She would have multitudinous furs and a closed and heated limousine to carry her through the white world. She could salve her conscience by taking up some of the more comfortable forms of war work. She could manage a Red Cross bandage-factory or a knitting-room or serve hot dishes in a cozy canteen.

At times from sheer creature discomfort she inclined toward matrimony, as many another woman has done. These craven moods alternated with periods of self-rebuke. She told herself that such a marriage would dishonor her and cheat Davidge.

Besides, marriage was not all wedding-bells and luxury; it had its gall as well as its honey. Even in divorceful America marriage still possesses for women a certain finality. Only one marriage in nine ended in divorce that year.

Mamise knew men and women, married, single, and betwixt. She was far, indeed, from that more or less imaginary character so frequent in fiction and so rare in reality, the young woman who knows nothing of life and mankind. Like every other woman that ever lived, she knew a good deal more than she would confess, and had had more experience than she would admit under oath. In fact, she did not deny that she knew more than she wished she knew, and Davidge had found her very tantalizing about just how much her experience totaled up.

She had observed the enormous difference between a man and a woman who meet occasionally and the same people chained together interminably. Quail is a delicacy for invalids and gourmets, but notoriously intolerable as a steady diet. On the other hand, bread is forever good. One never tires of bread. And a lucky marriage is as perennially refreshing as bread and butter. The maddening thing about marriage is what makes other lotteries irresistible: after all, capital prizes do exist, and some people get them.

Mamise had seen happy mates, rich and poor. In her lonelier hours she coveted their dual blessedness, enriched with joys and griefs shared in plenty and in privation.

Mamise liked Davidge better than she had ever liked any

other man. She supposed she loved him. Sometimes she longed for him with a kind of ferocity. Then she was afraid of him, of what he would be like as a husband, of what she would be like as a wife.

Mamise was in an absolute chaos of mind, afraid of everything and everybody, from the weather to wedlock. She had been lured into an office by the fascinating advertisements of freedom, a career, achievement, doing-your-bit and other catchwords. She had found that business has its boredoms no less than the prison walls of home, commerce its treadmills and its oakum-picking no less than the jail. The cozy little cottage and the pleasant chores of solitude began to nag her soul.

The destruction of the good ship *Clara* had dealt her a heavier blow than she at first realized, for the mind suffers from obscure internal injuries as the body does after a great shock. She understood what bitter tragedies threaten the business man no less than the monarch, the warrior, the poet, and the lover, though there has not been many an Æschylos or Euripides or Dante to make poetry of the Prometheus chained to the rocks of trade with the vulture pay-roll gnawing at his profits; the Œdipos in the factory who sees everything gone horribly awry; or the slow pilgrim through the business hell with all the infernal variations of bankruptcy, strikes, panics, and competition.

The blowing up of the *Clara* had revealed the pitiful truth that men may toil like swarming bees upon a painful and costly structure, only to see it all annulled at once by a careless or a malicious stranger. The *Clara* served as a warning that the ship *Mamise* now on the stocks and growing ever so slowly might be never finished, or destroyed as soon as done. A pall of discontent was gathering about her. It was the turn of that season in her calendar. The weather was conspiring with the inner November.

The infamous winter of 1917–18 was preparing to descend upon the blackest year in human annals. Everybody was unhappy; there was a frightful shortage of food among all nations, a terrifying shortage of coal, and the lowest temperature ever known would be recorded. America, less unfortunate than the other peoples, was bitterly disappointed in herself.

There was food in plenty for America, but not for her confederates. The prices were appalling. Wages went up and up, but never quite caught the expenses. It was necessary to send enormous quantities of everything to our allies lest they perish before we could arrive with troops. And Germany went on fiendishly destroying ships, foodstuffs, and capital, displaying in every victory a more insatiable cruelty, a more revolting cynicism toward justice, mercy, or truth.

The Kaiserly contempt for America's importance seemed to be justified. People were beginning to remember Rome, and to wonder if, after all, Germany might not crush France and England with the troops that had demolished Russia. And then America would have to fight alone.

At this time Mamise stumbled upon an old magazine of the ancient date of 1914. It was full of prophecies that the Kaiser would be dethroned, exiled, hanged, perhaps. The irony of it was ghastly. Nothing was more impossible than the downfall of the Kaiser—who seemed verifying his boasts that he took his crown from God. He was praising the strong sword of the unconquerable Germany. He was marshaling the millions from his eastern front to throw the British troops into the sea and smother the France he had bled white. The best that the most hopeful could do was to mutter: "Hurry! hurry! We've got to hurry!"

Mamise grew fretful about the delay to the ship that was to take her name across the sea. She went to Davidge to protest: "Can't you hurry up my ship? If she isn't launched soon I'm going to go mad."

Davidge threw back his head and emitted a noise between laughter and profanity. He picked up a letter and flung it down.

"I've just got orders changing the specifications again. This is the third time, and the third time's the charm; for now we've got to take out all we've put in, make a new set of drawings and a new set of castings and pretty blamed near tear down the whole ship and rebuild it."

"In the name of Heaven, why?"

"In the name of hades, because we've got to get a herd of railroad locomotives to France, and sending them over in pieces won't do. They want 'em ready to run. So the powers that be have ordered me to provide two hatchways

big enough to lower whole locomotives through, and pigeon-holes in the hold big enough to carry them. As far as the *Mamise* is concerned, that means we've just about got to rub it out and do it over again. It's a case of back to the mold-loft for *Mamise*."

"And about how much more delay will this mean?"

"Oh, about ninety days or thereabouts. If we're lucky we'll launch her by spring."

This was almost worse than the death of the *Clara*. That tragedy had been noble; it dealt a noble blow and woke the heart to a noble grief and courage. But deferment made the heart sick, and the brain and almost the stomach.

Davidge liked the disappointment no better than Mamise did, but he was used to it.

"And now aren't you glad you're not a ship-builder? How would you feel if you had got your wish to work in the yard and had turned your little velvet hands into a pair of nutmeg-graters by driving about ten thousand rivets into those plates, only to have to cut 'em all out again and drive 'em into an entirely new set of plates, knowing that maybe they'd have to come out another time and go back? How'd you like that?"

Mamise lifted her shoulders and let them fall.

Davidge went on:

"That's a business man's life, my dear—eternally making things that won't sell, putting his soul and his capital and his preparation into a pile of stock that nobody will take off his hands. But he has to go right on, borrowing money and pledging the past for the future and never knowing whether his dreams will turn out to be dollars or—junk!"

Mamise realized for the first time the pathos, the higher drama of the manufacturer's world, that world which poets and some other literary artists do not describe because they are too ignorant, too petty, too bookish. They sneer at the noble word *commercial* as if it were a reproach!

Mamise, however, looked on Davidge in his swivel-chair as a kind of despondent demigod, a Titan weary of the eternal strife. She tried to rise beyond a poetical height to the clouds of the practical.

"What will you do with all the workmen who are on that job?"

Davidge grinned. "They're announcing their monthly strike for higher wages—threatening to lay off the force. It 'd serve 'em right to take 'em at their word for a while. But you simply can't fight a labor union according to Queensbery rules, so I'll give 'em the raise and put 'em on another ship."

"And the *Mamise* will be idle and neglected for three months."

"Just about."

"The Germans couldn't have done much worse by her, could they?"

"Not much."

"I think I'll call it a day and go home," said Mamise.

"Better call it a quarter and go to New York or Palm Beach or somewhere where there's a little gaiety."

"Are you sick of seeing me round?"

"Since you won't marry me—yes."

Mamise sniffed at this and set her little desk in order, aligned the pencils in the tray, put the carbons back in the box and the rubber cover on the typewriter. Then she sank it into its well and put on her hat.

Davidge held her heavy coat for her and could not resist the opportunity to fold her into his arms. Just as his arms closed about her and he opened his lips to beg her not to desert him he saw over her shoulder the door opening.

He had barely time to release her and pretend to be still holding her coat when Miss Gabus entered. His elaborate guiltlessness confirmed her bitterest suspicions, and she crossed the room to deposit a sheaf of letters in Davidge's "in" basket and gather up the letters in his "out" basket. She passed across the stage with an effect of absolute refrigeration, like one of Richard III's ghosts.

Davidge was furious at Miss Gabus and himself. Mamise was furious at them both—partly for the awkwardness of the incident, partly for the failure of Davidge's enterprise against her lips.

When Miss Gabus was gone the ecstatic momentum was lost. Davidge grumbled:

"Shall I see you to-morrow?"

"I don't know," said Mamise.

She gave him her hand. He pressed it in his two palms

and shook his head. She shook her head. They were both rebuking the bad behavior of the fates.

Mamise trudged homeward—or at least houseward. She was in another of her irresolute states, and irresolution is the most disappointing of all the moods to the irresolute ones and all the neighbors. It was irresolution that made "Hamlet" a five-act play, and only a Shakespeare could have kept him endurable.

Mamise was becoming unendurable to herself. When she got to her cottage she found it as dismal as an empty ice-box. When she had started the fire going she had nothing else to do. In sheer desperation she decided to answer a few letters. There was an old one from Polly Widdicombe. She read it again. It contained the usual invitation to come back to reason and Washington.

Just for something positive to do she resolved to go. There was a tonic in the mere act of decision. She wrote a letter. She felt that she could not wait so long as its answer would require. She resolved to send a telegram.

This meant hustling out into the cold again, but it was something to do, somewhere to go, some excuse for a hope.

Polly telegraphed:

Come without fail dying to see you bring along a scuttle of coal if you can.

Mamise showed Davidge the telegram. He was very plucky about letting her go. For her sake he was so glad that he concealed his own loneliness. That made her underestimate it. He confirmed her belief that he was glad to be rid of her by making a lark of her departure. He filled an old suit-case with coal and insisted on her taking it. The porter who lugged it along the platform at Washington gave Mamise a curious look. He supposed that this was one of those suit-cases full of bottled goods that were coming into Washington in such multitudes since the town had been decreed absolutely dry. He shook it and was surprised when he failed to hear the glug-glug of liquor.

But Polly welcomed the suit-case as if it had been full of that other form of carbon which women wear in rings and necklaces. The whole country was underheated. To the

wheatless, meatless, sweetless days there were added the heatless months. Major Widdicombe took his breakfasts standing up in his overcoat. Polly and Mamise had theirs in bed, and the maids that brought it wore their heaviest clothes.

There were long lines of petitioners all day at the offices of the Fuel Administration. But it did little good. All the shops and theaters were kept shut on Mondays. Country clubs were closed. Every device to save a lump of coal was put into legal effect so that the necessary war factories might run and the ships go over the sea. Soon there would be gasoleneless Sundays by request, and all the people would obey. Bills of fare at home and at hotel would be regulated by law. Restaurants would be fined for serving more than one meat to one person. Grocers would be fined for selling too much sugar to a family. Placards, great billboards, and all the newspapers were filled with counsels to save, save, save, and buy, buy, buy Bonds, Bonds, Bonds People grew depressed at all this effort, all this sacrifice with so little show of accomplishment.

American troops, except a pitiful few, were still in America and apparently doomed to stay. This could easily be proved by mathematics, for there were not ships enough to carry them and their supplies. The Germans were building up reserves in France, and they had every advantage of inner lines. They could hurl an avalanche of men at any one of a hundred points of the thin Allied line almost without warning, and wherever they struck the line would split before the reserves could be rushed up to the crevasse. And once through, what could stop them? Indeed, the whisper went about that the Allies had no reserves worth the name. France and England were literally "all in."

Success and the hope of success did not make the Germans meek. They credited God with a share in their achievement and pinned an Iron Cross on Him, but they kept mortgaging His resources for the future. Those who had protested that the war had been forced on a peaceful Germany and that her majestic fight was all in self-defense came out now to confess —or rather to boast—that they had planned this triumph all along; for thirty years they had built and drilled and stored up reserves. And now they were about to sweep the world and make it a German planet.

The peaceful Kaiser admitted that he had toiled for this approaching day of glory. His war-weary, hunger-pinched subjects were whipped up to further endurance by a brandy of fiery promises, the prospects of incalculable loot, vast colonies, mountains of food, and indemnities sky-high. They were told to be glad that America had come into the war openly at last, so that her untouched treasure-chest could pay the bills.

In the whole history of chicken-computation there were probably never so many fowls counted before they were hatched—and in the final outcome never such a crackling and such a stench of rotten eggs.

But no one in those drear days was mad enough to see the outcome. The strategical experts protested against the wasteful "side-shows" in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Saloniki, and the taking of Jerusalem was counted merely a pretty bit of Christmas shopping that could not weigh against the fall of Kerensky, the end of Russian resistance in the Bolshevik upheaval, and the Italian stampede down their own mountain-sides.

Of all the optimists crazy enough to prophesy a speedy German collapse, no one put his finger on Bulgaria as the first to break.

So sublime, indeed, was the German confidence that many in America who had been driven to cover because of their Teutonic activities before America entered the war began to dream that they, too, would reap a great reward for their martyrdom on behalf of the Fatherland.

The premonition of the dawning of *Der Tag* stirred the heart of Nicky Easton, of course. He had led for months the life of a fox in a hunt-club county. Every time he put his head out he heard the bay of the hounds. He had stolen very few chickens, and he expected every moment to be pounced on. But now that he felt assured of a German triumph in a little while, he began to think of the future. His heart turned again to Mamise.

His life of hiding and stealing about from place to place had compelled him to a more ascetic existence than he had been used to. His German accent did not help him, and he had found that even those heavy persons known as light women, though they had no other virtue, had patriotism

enough to greet his advances with fierce hostility. His dialect insulted those who had relinquished the privilege of being insulted, and they would not soil their open palms with German-stained money.

In his alliance with Jake Nuddle for the blowing up of the *Clara*, and their later communications looking toward the destruction of other ships, he kept informed of Mamise. He always asked Jake about her. He was bitterly depressed by the news that she was "sweet on" Davidge. He was exultant when he learned from Jake that she had given up her work in the office and had gone to Washington. Jake learned her address from Abbie, and passed it on to Nicky.

Nicky was tempted to steal into Washington and surprise her. But enemy aliens were forbidden to visit the capital, and he was afraid to go by train. He had wild visions of motoring thither and luring her to a ride with him. He wanted to kidnap her. He might force her to marry him by threatening to kill her and himself. At least he might make her his after the classic manner of his fellow-countrymen in Belgium. But he had not force enough to carry out anything so masterful. He was a sentimental German, not a warrior.

In his more emotional moods he began to feel a prophetic sorrow for Marie Louise after the Germans had conquered the world. She would be regarded as a traitress. She had been adopted by Sir Joseph Webling and had helped him, only to abandon the cause and go over to the enemy.

If Nicky could convert her again to loyalty, persuade her to do some brave deed for the Fatherland in redemption of her blacksliding, then when *Der Tag* came he could reveal what she had done. When in that resurrection day the graves opened and all the good German spies and propagandists came forth to be crowned by *Gott* and the Kaiser, Nicky could lead Marie Louise to the dual throne, and, describing her reconciliation to the cause, claim her as his bride. And the Kaiser would say, "*Ende gut, alles gut!*"

Never a missionary felt more sanctity in offering salvation to a lost soul by way of repentance than Nicky felt when he went to the house of an American friend and had Mamise called on the long-distance telephone.

Mamise answered, "Yes, this is Miss Webling," to the faint-voiced long-distance operator, and was told to hold the

wire. She heard: "All ready with Washington. Go ahead" Then she heard a timid query:

"Hallow, hallow! Iss this Miss Vapelink?"

She was shocked at the familiar dialect. She answered:

"This is Miss Webling, yes. Who is it?"

"You don'd know my woice?"

"Yes—yes. I know you—"

"Pleass to say no names."

"Where are you?"

"In Philadelphia."

"All right. What do you want?"

"To see you."

"You evidently know my address."

"You know I cannot come by Vashington."

"Then how can I see you?"

"You could meet me some place, yes?"

"Certainly not."

"It is important, most important."

"To whom?"

"To you—only to you. It is for your sake."

She laughed at this; yet it set her curiosity on fire, as he hoped it would. He could almost hear her pondering. But what she asked was:

"How did you find my address?"

"From Chake—Chake Nuttle."

He could not see the wild look that threw her eyes and lips wide. She had never dreamed of such an acquaintance. The mere possibility of it set her brain whirling. It seemed to explain many things, explain them with a horrible clarity. She dared not reveal her suspicions to Nicky. She said nothing till she heard him speak again:

"Vell, you come, yes?"

"Where?"

"You could come here best?"

"No, it's too far."

"By Baltimore we could meet once?"

"All right. Where? When?"

"To-morrow. I do not know Baltimore good. Ve could take ride by automobile and talk so. Yes?"

"All right." This a little anxiously.

"To-morrow evening. I remember it is a train gets there

from Vashington about eight. I meet you. Make sure nobody sees you take that train, yes?"

"Yes."

"You know people follow people sometimes."

"Yes."

"I trust you alvays, Marie Louise."

"All right. Good-by."

"Goot-py, Marie Louise."

CHAPTER II

WHILE Mamise was talking her telephone ear had suffered several sharp and painful rasps, as if angry rattlesnakes had wakened in the receiver.

The moment she put it up the bell rang. Supposing that Nicky had some postscript to add, she lifted the receiver again. Her ear was as bewildered as your tongue when it expects to taste one thing and tastes another, for it was Davidge's voice that spoke, asking for her. She called him by name, and he growled:

"Good Lord! is that you? Who was the fascinating stranger who kept me waiting so long?"

"Don't you wish you knew?" she laughed. "Where are you now? At the shipyard?"

"No, I'm in Washington—ran up on business. Can I see you to-night?"

"I hope so—unless we're going out—as I believe we are. Hold the wire, won't you, while I ask." She came back in due season to say, "Polly says you are to come to dinner and go to a dance with us afterward."

"A dance? I'm not invited."

"It's a kind of club affair at a hotel. Polly has the right to take you—no end of big bugs will be there."

"I'm rusty on dancing, but with you—"

"Thanks. We'll expect you, then. Dinner is at eight. Wrap up well. It's cold, isn't it?"

He thought it divine of her to think of his comfort. The thought of her in his arms dancing set his heart to rioting. He was singing as he dressed, and as he rode out to Grinden Hall, singing a specimen of the new musical insanity known as "jazz"—so pestilential a music that even the fiddlers capered and writhed.

The Potomac was full of tumultuous ice, and the old Rosslyn bridge squealed with cold under the motor. It was

good to see the lights of the Hall at last, and to thaw himself out at the huge fireplace.

"Lucky to get a little wood," said Major Widdicombe. "Don't know what we'll do when it's gone. Coal is next to impossible."

Then the women came down, Polly and Mamise and two or three other house guests, and some wives of important people. They laid off their wraps and then decided to keep them on.

Davidge had been so used to seeing Mamise as a plainly clad, discouraged office-hack that when she descended the stairs and paused on the landing a few steps from the floor, to lift her eyebrows and her lip-corners at him, he was glad of the pause.

"Break it to me gently," he called across the balustrade.

She descended the rest of the way and advanced, revealed in her complete height and all her radiant vesture. He was dazed by her unimagined splendor.

As she gave him her hand and collected with her eyes the tribute in his, she said:

"Break what to you gently?"

"You!" he groaned. "Good Lord! Talk about 'the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome'!"

With amiable reciprocity she returned him a compliment on his evening finery.

"The same to you and many of them. You are quite stunning in décolleté. For a pair of common laborers, we are certainly gaudy."

Polly came up and greeted Davidge with, "So you're the fascinating brute that keeps Marie Louise down in the penitentiary of that awful ship-factory."

Davidge indicated her brilliance and answered: "Never again. She's fired! We can't afford her."

"Bully for you," said Polly. "I suppose I'm an old-fashioned, grandmotherly sort of person, but I'll be damned if I can see why a woman that can look as gorgeous as Marie Louise here should be pounding typewriter keys in an office. Of course, if she had to— But even then, I should say that it would be her solemn religious duty to sell her soul for a lot of glad-rags.

"A lot of people are predicting that women will never go

back to the foolish frills and furbelows of before the war; but —well, I'm no prophetess, but all I can say is that if this war puts an end to the dressmaker's art, it will certainly put civilization on the blink. Now, honestly, what could a woman accomplish in the world if she worked in overalls twenty-four hours a day for twenty-four years—what could she make that would be more worth while than getting herself all dressed up and looking her best?"

Davidge said: "You're talking like a French aristocrat before the Revolution; but I wish you could convince her of it."

Mamise was trying to take her triumph casually, but she was thrilled, thrilled with the supreme pride of a woman in her best clothes—in and out of her best clothes, and liberally illuminated with jewelry. She was now something like a great singer singing the highest note of her master-aria in her best rôle—herself at once the perfect instrument and the perfect artist.

Marie Louise went in on Davidge's arm. The dining-room was in gala attire, the best silver and all of it out—flowers and candles. But the big vault was cold; the men shivered and marveled at the women, who left their wraps on the backs of their chairs and sat up in no apparent discomfort with shoulders, backs, chests, and arms naked to the chill.

Polly was moved to explain to the great folk present just who Mamise was. She celebrated Mamise in her own way.

"To look at Miss Webling, would you take her for a perfect nut? She is, though—the worst ever. Do you know what she has done? Taken up stenography and gone into the office of a ship-building gang!"

The other squaws exclaimed upon her with various outcries of amazement.

"What's more," said Mamise, "I live on my salary."

This was considered incredible in the Washington of then. Mamise admitted that it took management.

Mamise said: "Polly, can you see me living in a shanty cooking my own breakfast and dinner and waiting on myself and washing my own dishes? And for lunch going to a big mess-hall, waiting on myself, too, and eating on the swollen arm of a big chair?"

Polly shook her head in despair of her. "Let those do it

that have to. Nobody's going to get me to live like a Belgian refugee without giving me the same excuse."

Mamise suddenly felt that her heroism was hardly more than a silly affectation, a patriotic pose. In these surroundings the memory of her daily life was disgusting, plain stupidity. Here she was in her element, at her superlative. She breathed deeply of the atmosphere of luxury, the incense of rich food served ceremoniously to resplendent people.

"I'm beginning to agree with you, Polly. I don't think I'll ever go back to honest work again."

She thought she saw in Davidge's eyes a gleam of approval. It occurred to her that he was renewing his invitation to her to become his wife and live as a lady. She was not insulted by the surmise.

When the women departed for the drawing-room, the men sat for a while, talking of the coal famine, the appalling debts the country was heaping into mountains—the blood-sweating taxes, the business end of the war, the prospect for the spring campaign on the Western Front, the avalanche of Russia, the rise of the Bolsheviki, the story that they were in German pay, the terrible toll of American lives it would take to replace the Russian armies, and the humiliating delay in getting men into uniform, equipped, and ferried across the sea. The astounding order had just been promulgated, shutting down all industry and business for four days and for the ten succeeding Mondays in order to eke out coal; this was regarded as worse than the loss of a great battle. Every aspect of the war was so depressing that the coroner's inquest broke up at once when Major Widdicombe said:

"I get enough of this in the shop, and I'm frozen through. Let's go in and jaw the women."

Concealing their loneliness, the men entered the drawing-room with the majestic languor of lions well fed.

Davidge paused to study Mamise from behind a smoke-screen that concealed his stare. She was listening politely to the wife of Holman, of the War Trade Board. Mrs. Holman's stories were always long, and people were always interrupting them because they had to or stay mute all night. Davidge was glad of her clatter, because it gave him a chance to revel in Mamise. She was presented to his eyes in a kind of mitigated silhouette against a bright-hued lamp-shade. She was

seated sidewise on a black Chinese chair. On the back of it her upraised arm rested. Davidge's eyes followed the strange and marvelous outline described by the lines of that arm, running into the sharp rise of a shoulder, like an apple against the throat, the bizarre shape of the head in its whimsical coiffure, the slope of the other shoulder carrying the caressing glance down that arm to the hand clasping a sheaf of outspread plumes against her knee, and on along to where one quaint impossible slipper with a fantastic high heel emerged from a stream of fabric that flowed on out to the train.

Then with the vision of honorable desire he imagined the body of her where it disappeared below the shoulders into the possession of the gown; he imagined with a certain awe what she must be like beneath all those long lines, those rounded surfaces, those eloquent wrinkles with their curious little pockets full of shadow, among the pools of light that satin shimmers with.

In other times and climes men had worn figured silks and satins and brocades, had worn long gowns and lace-trimmed sleeves, jeweled bonnets and curls, but now the male had surrendered to the female his prehistoric right to the fanciful plumage. These war days were grown so austere that it began to seem wrong even for women to dress with much more than a masculine sobriety. But the occasion of this ball had removed the ban on extravagance.

The occasion justified the maximum display of jewelry, too, and Mamise wore all she had. She had taken her gems from their prison in the safe-deposit box in the Trust Company cellar. They seemed to be glad to be at home in the light again. They reveled in it, winking, laughing, playing a kind of game in which light chased light through the deeps of color.

The oddity of the feminine passion for precious stones struck Davidge sharply. The man who built iron ships to carry freight wondered at the curious industry of those who sought out pebbles of price, and polished them, shaped them, faceted them, and fastened them in metals of studied design, petrified jellies that seemed to quiver yet defied steel.

He contrasted the cranes that would lift a locomotive and lower it into the hold of one of his ships with the tiny pincers with which a lapidary picked up a diamond fleck and sealed

it in platinum. He contrasted the pneumatic riveter with the tiny hammers of the goldsmith. There seemed to be no less vanity about one than the other. The work of the jeweler would outlast the iron hull. A diamond as large as a rivet-head would cost far more than a ship. Jewels, like sonnets and symphonies and flower-gardens, were good for nothing, yet somehow worth more than anything useful.

He wondered what the future would do to these arts and their patronesses. The one business of the world now was the manufacture, transportation, and efficient delivery of explosives.

He could understand how offensive bejeweled and banqueted people were to the humble, who went grimy and weary in dirty overalls over their plain clothes to their ugly factories and back to their uglier homes.

It was a consummation devoutly to be wished that nobody should spend his life or hers soiled and tired and fagged with a monotonous task. It seemed hard that the toiling woman and the wife and daughter of the toiler might not alleviate their bleak persons with pearl necklaces about their throats, with rubies pendant from their ears, and their fingers studded with sapphire and topaz.

Yet it did not look possible, somehow. And it seemed better that a few should have them rather than none at all, better that beauty should be allowed to reign somewhere than nowhere during its brief perfection.

And after all, what proof was there that the spoliation of the rich and the ending of riches would mean the enrichment of the poor? When panics came and the rich fasted the poor starved. Would the reduction of the opulent and the elevation of the paupers all to the same plain average make anybody happier? Would the poor be glad to learn that they could never be rich? With nobody to envy, would contentment set in? With ambition rated as a crime, the bequeathing of comfort to one's children rendered impossible, the establishment of one's destiny left to the decision of boards and by-laws, would there be satisfaction? The Bolsheviki had voted "universal happiness." It would be interesting to see how well Russia fared during the next year and how universally happiness might be distributed.

He frowned and shook his head as if to free himself from

these nettlesome riddles and left them to the Bolshevist Samaritans to solve in the vast laboratory where the manual laborers at last could work out their hearts' desires, with the upper class destroyed and the even more hateful middle class at their mercy.

It was bitter cold on the way to the ballroom in the Willard Hotel, and Davidge in his big coat studied Mamise smothered in a voluminous sealskin overcoat. This, too, had meant hardship for the poor. Many men had sailed on a bitter voyage to arctic regions and endured every privation of cold and hunger and peril that this young woman might ride cozy in any chill soever. The fur coat had cost much money, but little of it had fallen into the frosted hands of the men who clubbed the seal to death on the ice-floes. The sleek furrier in the warm city shop, when he sold the finished garment, took in far more than the men who went out into the wilderness and brought back the pelts. That did not seem right; yet he had a heavy rent to pay, and if he did not create the market for the furs, the sealers would not get paid at all for their voyage.

A division of the spoils that would rob no one, nor kill the industry, was beyond Davidge's imagining. He comforted himself with the thought that those loud mouths that advertised solutions of these labor problems were fools or liars or both; and their mouths were the tools they worked with most.

The important immediate thing to contemplate was the fascinating head of Mamise, quaintly set on the shapeless bulk of a sea-lion.

CHAPTER III

DAVIDGE had been a good dancer once, and he had not entirely neglected the new school of foot improvisation, so different from the old set steps.

Mamise was amazed to find that the strenuous business man had so much of the faun in his soul. He had evidently listened to the pipes of Pan and could "shake a sugar-heel" with a practised skill. There was a startling authority in the firmness with which he gathered her in and swept her through the kaleidoscopic throng, now dipping, now skipping, now limping, now running.

He gripped the savory body of Mamise close to him and found her to his whim, foreseeing it with a mysterious prescience. Holding her thus intimately in the brief wedlock of the dance, he began to love her in a way that he could think of only one word for—*terrible*.

She seemed to grow afraid, too, of the spell that was befogging them, and sought rescue in a flippancy. There was also a flattering spice of jealousy in what she murmured:

"You haven't spent all your afternoons and evenings building ships, young man!"

"No?"

"What cabarets have you graduated from?"

He quoted her own words, "Don't you wish you knew?"

"No."

"One thing is certain. I've never found in any of 'em as light a feather as you."

"Are you referring to my head or my feet?"

"Your blessed feet!"

His arm about her tightened to a suffocation, and he whirled her in a delirium of motion.

"That's unfair!" she protested, affrighted yet delighted by the fire of his ecstasy in their union. The music stopped, and she clung to him dizzily while he applauded with the other

dancers till the band renewed the tune. She had regained her mental with her bodily equilibrium, and she danced more staidly; yet she had seen into the crater of his heart and was not sorry that it existed.

The reprise of the dance was brief, and he had to surrender her from his embrace. He was unwontedly rhapsodic. "I wish we could sail on and on and on forever."

"Forever is a long time," she smiled.

"May I have the next dance?"

"Certainly not! Take Polly round and pay for your supper. But don't—"

"Don't what?"

"I don't know."

Polly was taken for the next dance, and he was glad of it, but he suffered at seeing how perfectly Mamise footed it with a young officer who also knew how to compel her to his whim. Davidge wondered if Mamise could be responding to this fellow as keenly as she responded to himself. The thought was intolerable. She could not be so wanton. It would amount to a hideous infidelity. Moorish jealousy smoldered in his heart, and he cursed public dancing as an infamous, an unbelievable promiscuity. Yet when he had Polly Widdicombe for the next dance, her husband had no cause for jealousy. Polly was a temperate dancer, all gaiety, esthetic-ism plus athleticism.

Davidge kept twisting his head about to see how Mamise comported herself. He was being swiftly wrung to that desperate condition in which men are made ready to commit monogamy. He felt that he could not endure to have Mamise free any longer.

He presented himself to her for the next dance.

She laughed. "I'm booked."

He blanched at the treacherous heartlessness and sat the dance out—stood it out, rather, among the superfluous men on the side-lines. A morose and ridiculous gloom possessed him at seeing still a fourth stranger with his arms about Mamise, her breast to his and her procedure obedient to his. Worse yet, when a fifth insolent stranger cut in on the twin stars, Mamise abandoned her fourth temporary husband for another with a levity that amounted to outrageous polyandry.

Davidge felt no impulse to cut in. He disliked dancing so

intensely that he wanted to put an end to the abomination, reform it altogether. He did not want to dance between those white arms so easily forsworn. He wanted to rescue Mamise from this place of horror and hale her away to a cave with no outlook on mankind.

It was she who sought him where he glowered. Perhaps she understood him. If she did, she was wise enough to enjoy the proof of her sway over him and still sane enough to take a joy in her triumph.

She introduced her partner—Davidge would almost have called the brute a paramour. He did not get the man's name and was glad of it—especially as the hunter deserted her and went after his next Sabine.

"You've lost your faithful stenographer," was the first phrase of Mamise's that Davidge understood.

"Why so?" he grumbled.

"Because this is the life for me. I've been a heroine and a war-worker about as long as I can. I'm for the fleshpots and the cold-cream jars and the light fantastic. Aren't you going to dance with me any more?"

"Just as you please," Davidge said, with a singularly boyish sulkiness, and wondered why Mamise laughed so mercilessly:

"Of course I please."

The music struck up an abandoned jig, but he danced with great dignity till his feet ran away with him. Then he made off with her again in one of his frenzies, and a laughter filled his whole being.

She heard him growl something.

"What did you say?" she said.

"I said, 'Damn you!'"

She laughed so heartily at this that she had to stop dancing for a moment. She astonished him by a brazen question:

"Do you really love me as much as that?"

"More," he groaned, and they bobbed and ducked and skipped as he muttered a wild anachronism:

"If you don't marry me I'll murder you."

"You're murdering me now. May I breathe, please?"

He was furious at her evasion of so solemn a proposal. Yet she was so beautifully alive and aglow that he could not exactly hate her. But he said:

"I won't ask you again. Next time you can ask me."

"All right; that's a bet. I'll give you fair warning."

And then that dance was over, and Mamise triumphant in all things. She was tumultuously hale and happy, and her lover loved her.

To her that hath—for now, whom should Mamise see but Lady Clifton-Wyatt? Her heart ached with a reminiscent fear for a moment; then a malicious hope set it going again. Major Widdicombe claimed Mamise for the next dance, and extracted her from Davidge's possession. As they danced out, leaving Davidge stranded, Mamise noted that Lady C.-W. was regarding Davidge with a startled interest.

The whirl of the dance carried her close to Lady Clifton-Wyatt, and she knew that Lady C.-W. had seen her. Broken glimpses revealed to her that Lady C.-W. was escorting her escort across the ballroom floor toward Davidge.

She saw the brazen creature tap Davidge's elbow and smile, putting out her hand with coquetry. She saw her debarrass herself of her companion, a French officer whose exquisite horizon-blue uniform was amazingly crossed with the wound and service chevrons of three years' warfaring. Nevertheless, Lady Clifton-Wyatt dropped him for the civilian Davidge. Mamise, flitting here and there, saw that Davidge was being led to the punch-altar, thence to a lonely strip of chairs, where Lady C.-W. sat herself down and motioned him to drop anchor alongside.

Mamise longed to be near enough to hear what she could guess: her enemy's artless prelude followed by gradual modulations to her main theme—Mamise's wicked record.

Mamise wished that she had studied lip-reading to get the details. But this was a slight vexation in the exultance of her mood. She was serene in the consciousness that Davidge already knew the facts about her, and that Lady Clifton-Wyatt's gossip would fall with the dreary thud of a story heard before. So Mamise's feet flew, and her heart made a music of its own to the tune of:

"Thank God, I told him!"

She realized, as never before, the tremendous comfort and convenience of the truth. She had been by instinct as veracious as a politely bred person may be, but now she understood that the truth is mighty good business. She resolved to deal in no other wares.

This resolution lasted just long enough for her to make a hasty exception: she would begin her exclusive use of the truth as soon as she had told Polly a neat lie in explanation of her inexplicable journey to Baltimore.

Lady C.-W. was doing Mamise the best turn in her power. Davidge was still angry at Mamise's flippancy in the face of his ardor. But Lady C.-W.'s attack gave the flirt the dignity of martyrdom. When Lady C.-W. finished her subtly casual account of all that Mamise had done or been accused of doing, Davidge crushed her with the quiet remark:

"So she told me."

"She told you that!"

"Yes, and explained it all!"

"She would!" was the best that Lady Clifton-Wyatt could do, but she saw that the case was lost. She saw that Davidge's gaze was following Mamise here and there amid the dancers, and she was sportswoman enough to concede:

"She is a beauty, anyway—there's no questioning that, at least."

It was the canniest thing she could have done to re-establish herself in Davidge's eyes. He felt so well reconciled with the world that he said:

"You wouldn't care to finish this dance, I suppose?"

"Why not?"

Lady Clifton-Wyatt was democratic—in the provinces and the States—and this was as good a way of changing the subject as any. She rose promptly and entered the bosom of Davidge. The good American who did not believe in aristocracies had just time to be overawed at finding himself hugging a real Lady with a capital L when the music stopped.

It is an old saw that what is too foolish to be said can be sung. Music hallows or denatures whatever it touches. It was quite proper, because quite customary, for Davidge and Lady Clifton-Wyatt to stand enfolded in each other's embrace so long as a dance tune was in the air. The moment the musicians quit work the attitude became indecent.

Amazing and eternal mystery, that custom can make the same thing mean everything, or nothing, or all the betweenthings. The ancient Babylonians carried the idea of the permissible embrace to the ultimate intimacy in their annual festivals, and the good women doubtless thought no more of it

than a woman of to-day thinks of waltzing with a presentable stranger. They went home to their husbands and their housework as if they had been to church. Certain Bolsheviki, even in the year 1918, put up placards renewing the ancient Mesopotamian custom, under the guise of a community privilege and a civic duty.

And yet some people pretend to differentiate between fashions and morals!

But nobody at this dance was foolish enough to philosophize. Everybody was out for a good time, and a Scotsman from the British embassy came up to claim Lady Clifton-Wyatt's hand and body for the next dance. Davidge had been mystically attuned anew to Mamise, and he found her in a mood for reconciliation. She liked him so well that when the Italian aviator to whom she had pledged the "Tickle Toe" came to demand it, she perjured herself calmly and eloped with Davidge. And Davidge, instead of being alarmed by her easy morals, was completely reassured.

But he found her unready with another perjury when he abruptly asked her:

"What are you doing to-morrow?"

"Let me see," she temporized in a flutter, thinking of Baltimore and Nicky.

"If you've nothing special on, how about a tea-dance? I'm getting addicted to this."

"I'm afraid I'm booked up for to-morrow," she faltered. "Polly keeps the calendar. Yes, I know we have some stupid date—I can't think just what. How about the day after?"

The deferment made his amorous heart sick, and to-morrow's to-morrow seemed as remote as Judgment Day. Besides, as he explained:

"I've got to go back to the shipyard to-morrow evening. Couldn't you give me a lunch—an early one at twelve-thirty?"

"Yes, I could do that. In fact, I'd love it!"

"And me too?"

"That would be telling."

At this delicious moment an insolent cub in boots and spurs cut in and would not be denied. Davidge was tempted to use his fists, but Mamise, though she longed to tarry with Davidge, knew the value of tantalism, and consented to the abduction. For revenge Davidge took up with Polly and

danced after Mamise, to be near her. He followed so close that the disastrous cub, in a sudden pirouette, contrived to swipe Polly across the shin and ankle-bones with his spur.

She almost swooned of agony, and clung to Davidge for support, mixing astonishing profanity with her smothered groans. The cub showered apologies on her, and reviled "Regulations" which compelled him to wear spurs with his boots, though he had only a desk job.

Polly smiled at him murderously, and said it was nothing. But Mamise saw her distress, rid herself of the hapless criminal and gave Polly her arm, as she limped through the barrage of hurtling couples. Polly asked Davidge to retrieve her husband from the sloe-eyed ambassadress who was hypnotizing him. She wailed to Mamise:

"I know I'm marked for life. I ought to have a wound-chevron for this. I've got to go home and put my ankle in splints. I'll probably have to wear it in a sling for a month. I'd like to kill the rotten hound that put me out of business. And I had the next dance with that beautiful Rumanian devil! You stay and dance with your ship-builder!"

Mamise could not even think of it, and insisted on bidding good night to the crestfallen Davidge. He offered to ride out home with her, but Polly refused. She wanted to have a good cry in the car.

Davidge bade Mamise good night, reminded her that she was plighted to luncheon at twelve-thirty, and went to the house of the friend he was stopping with, the hotels being booked solid for weeks ahead. He was nursing a stern determination to endure bachelordom no longer.

Mamise was thinking of Davidge tenderly with one of her brains, while another segment condoled with Polly. But most of her wits were engaged in hunting a good excuse for her Baltimore escapade the next afternoon, and in discarding such implausible excuses as occurred to her.

Bitter chill it was, and these owls, for all their feathers, were a-cold. Major Widdicombe was chattering.

"I danced myself into a sweat, and now my undershirt is all icicles. I know I'll die of pneumonia."

He shifted his foot, and one of his spurs grazed the ankle of Polly, who was snuggling to him for warmth.

She yowled: "My Gawd! My yankle! You'll not last long enough for pneumonia if you touch me again."

He was filled with remorse, but when he tried to reach round to embrace her, she would none of him.

When they got to the bridge, they were amazed at the lazy old Potomac. It was a white torment of broken ice, roaring and slashing and battering the piers of the ancient bridge ominously, huge sheets clambering up and falling back split and broken, with the uproar of an attack on a walled town.

The chauffeur went to full speed, and the frosty boards shrilled under the flight.

The house was cold when they reached it, and Mamise's room was like a storage-vault. She tore off her light dancing-dress and shivered as she stripped and took refuge in a cobwebby nightgown. She threw on a heavy bathrobe and kept it on when she crept into the icy interstice between the all-too-snowy sheets.

She had forgotten to explain to Polly about her Baltimore venture, and she shivered so vigorously that sleep was impossible to her palsied bones. She grew no warmer from besetting visions of the battle-front. She tried to shame herself out of her chill by contrasting her opulent bed with the dreadful dugouts in France, the observation posts, the shell-riddled ruins, where millions somehow existed. Again, as at Valley Forge, American soldiers were marching there in the snow barefooted, or in rags or in wooden sabots, for lack of ships to get new shoes across.

Yet, in these frozen hells there were not men enough. The German offensive must not find the lines so sparsely defended. Men must be combed out of every cranny of the nations and herded to the slaughter. America was denying herself warmth in order to build shells and to shuttle the ships back and forth. There was need of more women, too—thousands more to nurse the men, to run the canteens, to mend the clothes, to warm men's hearts *via* their stomachs, and to take their minds off the madness of war a little while. The Salvation Army would furnish them hot doughnuts in the trenches and heat up their courage. Actors and actresses were playing at all the big cantonments now. Later they would be going across to play in France—one-night stands, two a day in Picardy.

Suddenly Mamise felt the need to go abroad. In a kind of

burlesque of the calling of the infant Samuel, she sat up in her bed, startled as by a voice calling her to a mission. She had been an actress, a wanderer, a performer in cheap theaters, a catcher of late trains, a dweller in rickety hotels. She knew cold, and she had played half clad in draughty halls.

She had escaped from the life and had tried to escape the memory of it. But now that she was so cold she felt that nothing was so pitiful as to be cold. She understood, with a congealing vividness, how those poor droves of lads in bitterer cold were suffering, scattered along the frontiers of war like infinite flocks of sheep caught in a blizzard. She felt ashamed to be here shivering in this palatial misery when she might be sharing the all-but-unbearable squalor of the soldiers.

The more she recoiled from the hardships the more she felt the impulse. It would be her atonement.

She would buy a trombone and retire into the wilderness to practise it. She would lay her dignity, her aristocracy, her pride, on the altar of sacrifice, and go among the despondent soldiers as a Sister of Gaiety. Perhaps Bill the Blackface-man would be going over—if he had not stayed in Germany too long and been interned there. To return to the team with him, being the final degradation, would be the final atonement. She felt that she was called, called back. There could be nothing else she would hate more to do; therefore she would love to do that most of all.

She would lunch with Davidge to-morrow, tell him her plan, bid him farewell, go to Baltimore, learn Nicky's secret, thwart it one way or another—and then set about her destiny.

She abhorred the relapse so utterly that she wept. The warm tears refreshed her eyes before they froze on her cheeks, and she fell asleep in the blissful assurance of a martyrdom.

CHAPTER IV

THE next morning Mamise woke in her self-warmed bed, at the nudge of a colored maid bundled up like an Eskimo, who carried a breakfast-tray in mittened hands.

Mamise said: "Oh, good morning, Martha. I'll bathe before breakfast if you'll turn on the hot water, please."

"Hot water? Humph! Pipes done froze last night, an' bus' loose this mo'nin', and fill the kitchen range with water an' bus' loose again. No plumber here yit. Made this breakfuss on the gas-stove. That's half-froze, tew. I tell you, ma'am, you're lucky to git your coffee nohow. Better take it before it freezes, tew."

Mamise sighed and glanced at the clock. The reproachful hands stood at eleven-thirty.

"Did the clock freeze, too? That can't be the right time!"

"Yessum, that's the raht tahm."

"Great heavens!"

"Yes, ma'am."

Mamise sat up, drew the comforters about her back, and breakfasted with speed. She dressed with all the agility she could muster.

She regretted the bath. She missed it, and so must we all. In modern history, as in modern fiction, it is not nice in the least for the heroine—even such a dubious heroine as Mamise—to have a bathless day. As for heroes, in the polite chronicles they get at least two baths a day: one heroic cold shower in the morning and one hot tub in the late afternoon before getting into the faultless evening attire. This does not apply to heroes of Russian masterpieces, of course, for they never bathe. ("Why should they," my wife puts in, "since they're going to commit suicide, anyway?")

But the horrors of the Great War included this atrocity,

that the very politest people came to know the old-fashioned luxury of an extra-dry life. There was a time when cleanliness was accounted as ungodliness and the Christian saints anathematized the bath as an Oriental pollution. During our war of wars there was a vast amount of helpless holy living.

Exquisite gentlemen kept to their clothes for weeks at a time and grew rancid and lousy among the rats that were foul enough to share their stinking dens with them. If these gentlemen were wounded, perchance, they added stale blood, putrefaction, and offal to their abominable fetor.

And women who had been pretty and soapy and without smell, and who had once blanched with shame at the least maculation, lived with these slovenly men and vermin and dead horses and old dead soldiers and shared their glorious loathsomeness.

The world acquired a strong stomach, and Mamise's one skip-bath day must be endured. If the indecency ever occurred again it will be left unmentioned. Heaven knows that even this morning she looked pure enough when she was dressed.

Mamise found that Polly was still in bed, giving her damaged ankle as an excuse. She stuck it out for Mamise's inspection, and Mamise pretended to be appalled at the bruise she could almost see.

Mamise remembered her plan to go abroad and entertain the soldiers. Polly tried to dissuade her from an even crazier scheme than ship-building, but ended by promising to telephone her husband to look into the matter of a passport for her.

Despite her best efforts, it was already twelve-thirty and Mamise had not left the house. She was afraid that Davidge would be miffed. Polly suggested telephoning the hotel.

Those were bad days for telephoners. The wires were as crowded as everything else.

"It will take an hour to get the hotel," said Mamise, "another hour to page the man. I'll make a dash for it. He'll give me a little grace, I know."

The car was not ready when she got to the door. The engine was balky and bucky with the cold, and the chauffeur in a like mood. The roads were sleety and skiddy, and required careful driving.

Best of all, when she reached the bridge at last, she found

it closed to traffic. The Potomac had been infected by the war spirit. In sheer Hunnishness it had ravaged its banks, shearing away boat-houses and piers, and carrying all manner of wreckage down to pound the old aqueduct bridge with. The bridge was not expected to live.

It did, but it was not intrusted with traffic till long after the distraught Mamise had been told that the only way to get to Washin ton was by the Highway Bridge from Alexandria, and this meant a détour of miles. It gave Mamise her first and only grand rounds through Fort Myer and the Arlington National Cemetery. She felt sorry for the soldiers about the cold barracks, but she was in no mood to respond to the marble pages of the Arlington epic.

The night before she had beheld in a clear vision the living hosts in Flanders and France, but here under the snow lay sixteen thousand dead, two thousand a hundred and eleven heroes under one monument of eternal anonymity—dead from all our wars, and many of them with their wives and daughters privileged to lie beside them.

But the mood is everything, and Mamise was too fretful to rise to this occasion; and when her car had crept the uneasy miles and reached the Alexandria bridge and crossed it, and wound through Potomac Park, past the Washington Monument standing like a stupendous icicle, and reached the hotel, she was just one hour late.

Davidge had given her up in disgust and despair, after vain efforts to reach her at various other possible luncheon-places. He searched them all on the chance that she might have misunderstood the rendezvous. And Mamise spent a frantic hour trying to find him at some hotel. He had registered nowhere, since a friend had put him up. The sole result of this interesting game of two needles hunting each other through a haystack was that Davidge went without lunch and Mamise ate alone.

In the late afternoon Davidge made another try. He finally got Polly Widdicombe on the telephone and asked for Mamise. Polly expressed her amazement.

"Why, she just telephoned that she was staying in town to dine with you and go to the theater."

"Oh!" said the befuddled Davidge. "Oh, of course! Silly of me! Good-by!"

Now he was indeed in a mental mess. Besides, he had another engagement to dinner. He spent a long, exasperating hour in a telephone-chase after his host, told a poor lie to explain the necessity for breaking the engagement, and spent the rest of the evening hunting Mamise in vain.

When he took the train for his shipyard at last he was in a hopeless confusion between rage at Mamise and fear that some mishap had befallen her. It would have been hard to tell whether he loved her or hated her the more.

But she, after giving up the pursuit of him, had taken up an inquiry into the trains to Baltimore. The time was now too short for her to risk a journey out to Grinden Hall and back for a suit-case, in view of the Alexandria détour. She must, therefore, travel without baggage. Therefore she must return the same night. She found, to her immense relief, that this could be done. The seven-o'clock train to Baltimore reached there at eight, and there was a ten-ten train back.

She had not yet devised a lie to appease Polly with, but now an inspiration came to her. She had told Davidge that she was dining out with Polly somewhere; consequently it would be safe to tell Polly that she was dining out with Davidge somewhere. The two would never meet to compare notes. Besides, it is pleasanter to lie by telephone. One cannot be seen to blush.

She called up Grinden Hall and was luckily answered by what Widdicombe called "the ebony maid with the ivory head." Mamise told her not to summon her lame mistress to the telephone, but merely to say that Miss Webling was dining with Mr. Davidge and going to the theater with him. She made the maid repeat this till she had it by heart, then rang off.

This was the message that Polly received and later transmitted to Davidge for his bewilderment.

To fill the hours that must elapse before her train could leave, Mamise went to one of those moving-picture shows that keep going without interruption. Public benefactors maintain them for the salvation of women who have no homes or do not want to go to them yet.

The moving-picture service included the usual news weekly, as usual leading one to marvel why the stupid subjects shown were selected from all the fascinating events of the

time. Then followed a doleful imitation of Mr. Charles Chaplin, which proved by its very fiasco the artistry of the original.

The *cinema de résistance* was a long and idiotic vampire picture in which a stodgy creature lured impossible males to impossible ruin by wiles and attitudes that would have driven any actual male to flight, laughter, or a call for the police. But the audience seemed to enjoy it, as a substitute, no doubt, for the old-fashioned gruesome fairy-stories that one accepts because they are so unlike the tiresome realities. Mamise wondered if vampirism really succeeded in life. She was tempted to try a little of it some time, just as an experiment, if ever opportunity offered.

In any case, the picture served its main purpose. It whiled away the dull afternoon till the dinner hour. She took her dinner on the train, remembering vividly how her heart history with Davidge had begun on a train. She missed him now, and his self-effacing gallantry.

The man opposite her wanted to be cordial, but his motive was ill concealed, and Mamise treated him as if he didn't quite exist. Suddenly she remembered with a gasp that she had never paid Davidge for that chair he gave up to her. She vowed again that she would not forget. She felt a deep remorse, too, for a day of lies and tricks. She regretted especially the necessity of deceiving Davidge. It was her privilege to hoodwink Polly and other people, but she had no right to deceive Davidge. She was beginning to feel that she belonged to him.

She resolved to atone for these new transgressions, too, as well as her old, by getting over to France as soon as possible and subjecting herself to a self-immolation among hardships. After the war—assuming that the war would soon end and that she would come out of it alive—afterward she could settle down and perhaps marry Davidge.

Reveling in these pleasantly miserable schemes, she was startled to find Baltimore already gathering round the train. And she had not even begun to organize her stratagems against Nicky Easton. She made a hasty exit from the car and sought the cab-ranks outside.

From the shadows a shadowy man semi-detached himself, lifted his hat, and motioned her to an open door. She bent

her head down and her knees up and entered a little room on wheels.

Nicky had evidently given the chauffeur instructions, for as soon as Nicky had come in, doubled up, and seated himself the limousine moved off—into what adventures? Mamise was wondering.

BOOK VI

IN BALTIMORE

"So I have already done something more for Germany. That's splendid. Now tell me what else I can do." Nicky was too intoxicated with his success to see through her thin disguise.

CHAPTER I

MAMISE remembered her earlier visits to Baltimore as a tawdry young vaudevillette. She had probably walked from the station, lugging her own valise, to some ghastly theatrical boarding-house. Perhaps some lover of hers had carried her baggage for her. If so, she had forgotten just which one of her experiences he was.

Now she hoped to be even more obscure and unconsidered than she had been then, when a little attention was meat and drink, and her name in the paper was a sensation. She knew that publicity, like love, flees whoso pursueth and pursues who flees it, but she prayed that the rule would be proved by an exception to-night, and that she might sneak out as anonymously as she had sneaked in.

Nicky Easton was a more immediate problem. He was groping for her hands. When he found them she was glad that she had her gloves on. They were chaperoned, too, as it were, by their heavy wraps. She was fairly lost in her furs and he in a burly overcoat, so that when in a kind of frenzy he thrust one cumbrous arm about her the insulation was complete. He might as well have been embracing the cab she was in.

But the insolence of the intention enraged her, and she struggled against him as a she-bear might rebuff a too familiar bruin—buffeted his arms away and muttered:

"You imbecile! Do you want me to knock on the glass and tell the driver to let me out?"

"*Nein doch!*"

"Then let me alone or I will."

Nicky sighed abysmally and sank back. He said nothing at all to her, and she said the same to him while long strips of Baltimorean marble stoops went by. They turned into Charles Street and climbed past its statue-haunted gardens and on out to the north.

They were almost at Druid Hill Park before Mamise realized that she was wasting her time and her trip for nothing. She spoke angrily:

"You said you wanted to see me. I'm here."

Nicky fidgeted and sulked:

"I do not neet to told you now. You have such a hatink from me, it is no use."

"If you had told me you simply wanted to spoon with me I could have stayed at home. You said you wanted to ask me something."

"I have my enswer. It is not any neet to esk."

Mamise was puzzled; her wrath was yielding to curiosity. But she could not imagine how to coax him out of silence.

His disappointment coaxed him. He groaned:

"*Ach Gott*, I am so lunly. My own people doand trust me. These Yenkees also not. I get no chence to proof how I loaf my *Vaterland*. But the time comes soon, and I must make patience. *Eile mit Weile!*"

"You'd better tell me what's on your mind," Mamise suggested, but he shook his head. The car rolled into the gloom of the park, a gloom rather punctuated than diminished by the street-lamps. Mamise realized that she could not extort Nicky's secret from him by asserting her own dignity.

She wondered how to persuade him, and found no ideas except such silly schemes as were suggested by her memory of the vampire picture. She hated the very passage of such thoughts through her mind, but they kept returning, with an insistent idea that a patriotic vampire might accomplish something for her country as Delilah and Judith had "vamped" for theirs. She had never seen a vampire exercise her fascinations in a fur coat in a dark automobile, but perhaps the dark was all the better for her purpose.

At any rate, she took the dare her wits presented her, and after a struggle with her own mutinous muscles she put out her hand and sought Nicky's, as she cooed:

"Come along, Nicky, don't be so cantankerous."

His hand registered the surprise he felt in the fervor of its clutch:

"But you are so colt!"

She insinuated, "You couldn't expect me to make love to you the very first thing, could you?"

"You mean you do like me?"

Her hands wringing his told the lie her tongue refused. And he, encouraged and determined to prove his rating with her, flung his arm about her again and drew her, resisting only in her soul, close to him.

CHAPTER II

BUT when his lips hunted hers she hid them in her fur collar; and he, imputing it to coquetry, humored her, finding her delicate timidity enhancing and inspiring. He chuckled:

"You shall kiss me yet."

"Not till you have told me what you sent for me for."

"No, feerst you must give me one to proof your good fate—your good face—" He was trying to say "good faith."

She was stubborn, but he was more obstinate still, and he had the advantage of the secret.

And so at last she sighed "All right," and put up her cheek to pay the price. His arms tightened about her, and his lips were not content with her cheek. He fought to win her lips, but she began to tear off her gloves to scratch his eyes out if need be for release.

She was revolted, and she would have marred his beauty if he had not let her go. Once freed, she regained her self-control, for the sake of her mission, and said, with a mock seriousness:

"Now, be careful, or I won't listen to you at all."

Sighing with disappointment, but more determined than ever to make her his, he said:

"Feerst I must esk you, how is your feelink about Chermany?"

"Just as before."

"Chust as vich 'before'? Do you loaf Chermany or hate?"

She was permitted to say only one thing. It came hard:

"I love her, of course."

"*Ach, behüt' dich, Gott!*" he cried, and would have clasped her again, but she insisted on discipline. He began his explanation.

"I did told you how, to safe my life in England, I confessed somethings. Many of our people here will not forgive. My

only vay to get back vere I have been is to make—as Americans say—to make myself skvare by to do some big vork. I have done a little, not much, but more can be if you help."

"What could I do?"

"Much things, but the greatest—listen once: our Chermany has no fear of America so long America is on this side of the Atlentic Ozean. Americans build ships; Chermany must destroy fester as they build. Already I have made one ship less for America. I cannot pooblish advertisink, but my people shall one day know, and that day comes soon; *Der Tag* is almost here—you shall see! Our army grows alvays, in France; and England and France can get no more men. Ven all is ready, Chermany moves like a—a avalenche down a mountain and covers France to the sea.

"On that day our fleet—our glorious ships—comes out from Kiel Canal, vere man holds them beck like big dogs in leash. On those beautiful day, Chermany conquers on lent and on sea. France dies, and England's navy goes down into the deep and comes never back.

"*Ach Gott*, such a day it shall be—when old England's empire goes into history, into ancient history vit Roossia and Rome and Greece and Bebylonia.

"England gone, France gone, Italy gone—who shall safe America and her armies and her unborn ships, and her cannon and shell and air-ships not yet so much as begun?

"*Der Tag* shall be like the lest day ven *Gott* makes the graves open and the dead come beck to life. The Americans shall fall on knees before our Kaiser, and he shall render chudgment. Such a payink!

"Now the Yenkees despise us Chermans. Ve cannot go to this city, to that dock. Everywhere is dead-lines and permissions and internment camps and persecutions, and all who are not in prison are afraid. They change their names from Cherman to English now, but soon they shall lift their heads and it shall be the Americans who shall know the dead-lines, the licenses, the internment camps.

"So, Marie Louise, my sveetheart, if you can show and I can show that in the dark night ve did not forget the *Vaterland*, ve shall be proud and safe.

"It is to make you safe ven comes *Der Tag* I speak to you now. I vish you should share my vork now, so you

can share my life efterwards. Now do I loaf you, Marie Louise? Now do I give you proof?"

Mamise was all ashudder with the intensity of his conviction. She imagined an all-conquering Germany in America. She needed but to multiply the story of Belgium, of Serbia, of prostrate Russia. The Kaiser had put in the shop-window of the world samples enough of the future as it would be made by Germany.

And in the mood of that day, with defeatism rife in Europe, and pessimism miasmatic in America, there was reason enough for Nicky to believe in his prophecy and to inspire belief in its possibility. The only impossible thing about it was that the world should ever endure the dominance of Germany. Death would seem better to almost everybody than life in such a civilization as she promised.

Mamise feared the Teutonic might, but she could not for a moment consent to accept it. There was only one thing for her to do, and that was to learn what plans she could, and thwart them. Here within her grasp was the long-sought opportunity to pay off the debt she had incurred. She could be a soldier now, at last. There was no price that Nicky might have demanded too great, too costly, too shameful for her to pay. To denounce him or defy him would be a criminal waste of opportunity.

She said: "I understand. You are right, of course. Let me help in any way I can. I only wish there were something big for me to do."

Nicky was overjoyed. He had triumphed both as patriot and as lover.

"There is a big think for you to do," he said. "You can all you vill."

"Tell me," she pleaded.

"You are in shipyard. This man Davidge goes on building ships. I gave him fair warning. I sinked one ship for him, but he makes more."

"You sank his ship?" Mamise gasped.

"Sure! The *Clara*, he called her. I find where she goes to take cargo. I go myself. I row up behind the ship in little boat, and I fasten by the rudder-post under the water, where no one sees, a bomb. It is all innocent till ship moves. Then every time the rudder turns a little screw turns in the machine.

"It turns for two, three days; then—*boom!* It makes explosion, tears ship to pieces, and down she goes. And so goes all the next ships if you help again."

"Again? What do you mean by again?"

"It is you, Marie Louise, who sinks the *Clara*."

Her laugh of incredulity was hardly more than a shiver of dread.

"*Ja wohl!* You did told Chake Nuttle vat Davidge tells you. Chake Nuttle tells me. I go and make sink the ship!"

"Jake Nuddle! It was Jake that told you!" Mamise faltered, seeing her first vague suspicions damnably confirmed.

"Sure! Chake Nuttle is my *Leutnant*. He has had much money, He gets more. He shall be rich man after comes *Der Tag*. It might be we make him von Nuttle! and you shall be Gräfin von Oesten."

Mamise was in an abject terror. The thick trees of the park were spooky as the dim light of the car elicited from the black wall of dark faint details of tree-trunks and naked boughs stark with winter. She was in a hurry to learn the rest and be gone. She spoke with a poor imitation of pride:

"So I have already done something more for Germany. That's splendid. Now tell me what else I can do, for I want to—to get busy right away."

Nicky was too intoxicated with his success to see through her thin disguise.

"You are close by Davidge. Chake Nuttle tells me he is sveet on you. You have his confidence. You can learn what secrets he has. Next time we do not vait for ship to be launched and to go for cargo. It might go some place ve could not find.

"So now ve going blow up those ships before they touch vater—ve blow up his whole yard. You shall go beck and take up again your vork, and ven all is right I come down and get a job. I dress like vorkman and get into the yard. And I bring in enough bombs to blow up all the ships and the cranes and the machines.

"Chake Nuttle tells me Davidge just gets a plate-bending machine. Forty-five t'ousand dollars it costs him, and long time to get. In one minute—poof! Ve bend that plate-bender!"

He laughed a great Teutonic laugh and supposed that

she was laughing, too. When he had subsided a little, he said:

"So now you know vat you are to make! You like to do so much for Chermany, yes?"

"Oh yes! Yes!" said Mamise.

"You promise to do vat I send you vord?"

"Yes." She would have promised to blow up the Capitol.

"*Ach*, how beautiful you are even in the dark! Kiss me!"

Remembering Judith, she paid that odious price, wishing that she might have the beast's infamous head with a sword. It was a kiss of betrayal, but she felt that it was no Judas-kiss, since Nicky was no Christ.

He told her more of his plans in detail, and was so childishly proud of his superb achievements, past and future, that she could hardly persuade him to take her back to the station. He assured her that there was abundant time, but she would not trust his watch. She explained how necessary it was for her to return to Washington and to Polly Widdicombe's house before midnight. And at last he yielded to her entreaties, opened the door, and leaned out to tell the driver to turn back.

Mamise was uneasy till they were out of the park and into the lighted streets again. But there was no safety here, for as they glided down Charles Street a taxicab going with the reckless velocity of taxicabs tried to cut across their path.

There was a swift fencing for the right of way, and then the two cars came together with a clash and much crumpling of fenders.

The drivers descended to wrangle over the blame, and Mamise had visions of a trip to the police station, with a consequent exposure. But Nicky was alive to the danger of notoriety. He got out and assumed the blame, taking the other driver's part and offering to pay the damages.

The taxicab-driver assessed them liberally at fifty dollars, and Nicky filled his palm with bills, ordering his own driver to proceed. The car limped along with a twisted steering-gear, and Nicky growled thanksgivings over the narrow escape the German Empire had had from losing two of its most valuable agents.

Mamise was sick with terror of what might have been. She saw the collision with a fatal result, herself and Nicky killed and flung to the street, dead together. It was not the

fear of dying that froze her soul; it was the posthumous blow she would have given to Davidge's trust in her and all women, the pain she would have inflicted on his love. For to his dying day he would have believed her false to him, a cheap and nasty trickster, sneaking off to another town to a rendezvous with another man. And that man a German!

The picture of his bitter disillusionment and of her own unmerited and eternal disgrace was intolerably real in spite of the fact that she knew it to be untrue, for our imaginations are far more ancient and more irresistible than our late and faltering reliance on the truth; the heavens and hells we fancy have more weight with our credulities than any facts we encounter. We can dodge the facts or close our eyes to them, but we cannot escape our dreams, whether our eyes are wide or sealed.

Mamise could not free herself of this nightmare till she had bidden Nicky good-by the last time and left him in the cab outside the station.

Further nightmares awaited her, for in the waiting-room she could not fight off the conviction that the train would never arrive. When it came clanging in on grinding wheels and she clambered aboard, she knew that it would be wrecked, and the finding of her body in the débris, or its disappearance in the flames, would break poor Davidge's heart and leave her to the same ignominy in his memory.

While the train swung on toward Washington, she added another torment to her collection: how could she save Davidge from Nicky without betraying her sister's husband into the hands of justice? What right had she to tell Davidge anything when her sacred duty to her family and her poor sister must first be heartlessly violated?

BOOK VII

AT THE SHIPYARD

Nobody recognized the lily-like beauty of Miss Webling in the smutty-faced passer-boy crouching at Sutton's elbow.

CHAPTER I

MAMISE was astounded by the altered aspect of her own soul, for people can on occasion accomplish what the familiar Irish drillmaster invited his raw recruits to do—"Step out and take a look at yourselves."

Also, like the old lady of the nursery rhymes whose skirts were cut off while she slept, Mamise regarded herself with incredulity and exclaimed:

"Can this be I?"

If she had had a little dog at home, it would have barked at her in unrecognition and convinced her that she was not herself.

What astounded her was the realization that the problem of disregarding either her love or her duty was no longer a difficult problem. In London, when she had dimly suspected her benefactors, the Weblings, of betraying the trust that England put in them, she had abhorred the thought of mentioning her surmise to any one who might harm them. Later, at the shipyard, when she had suspected her sister's husband of disloyalty, she had put away the thought of action because it would involve her sister's ruin. But now, as she left Baltimore, convinced that her sister's husband was in a plot against her lover and her country, she felt hardly so much as a brake on her eagerness for the sacrifice of her family or herself. The horror had come to be a solemn duty so important as to be almost pleasant. She was glad to have something at last to give up for her nation.

The thorough change in her desires was due to a complete change in her soul. She had gradually come to love the man whose prosperity was threatened by her sister's husband, and her vague patriotism had been stirred from dreams to delirium. Almost the whole world was undergoing such a war change. The altar of freedom so shining white had recently become an altar of sacrifice splashed with the blood of its votaries.

Men were offering themselves, casting from them all the old privileges of freedom, the hopes of success in love and business, and submitting to discipline, to tyranny, to vile hardships. Wives and mothers were hurrying their men to the slaughter; those who had no men to give or men too weak for the trenches or unwilling to go were ashamed of themselves because they were missing from the beadroll of contributors.

Mamise had become fanatic with the rest. She had wished to build ships, and had been refused more than a stenographer's share in the process. Next she had planned to go to the firing-line herself and offer what gift she had—the poor little gift of entertaining the soldiers with the vaudeville stunts she had lived down. And while she waited for a passport to join the army of women in France, she found at hand an opportunity to do a big deed, to thwart the enemy, to save ships and all the lives that ships alone could save. The price would be the liberty and what little good name her sister's husband had; it would mean protests and tears from her poor sister, whom life had dealt with harshly enough already.

But Mamise counted the cost as nothing compared to what it would buy. She dared not laugh aloud in the crowded chair-car, but her inner being was shaken with joy. She had learned to love Davidge and to adore that strange, shapeless idea that she called her country. Instead of sacrificing her lover to her people, she could serve both by the same deed. She was wildly impatient for the moment when she could lay before Davidge the splendid information she had secured at the expense of a few negligible lies. If they should cost her a decade in purgatorial torments, she would feel that they were worth it.

She reached Washington at a little after eleven and Grinden Hall before midnight. Now as she stood on the portico and looked across the river at the night-lit city, she felt such a pride as she had never known.

She waved a salutation to the wraith of a town, her mind, if not her lips, voicing the words:

"You owe me something, old capital. You'll never put up any statues to me or carve my name on any tablets, but I'm doing something for you that will mean more than anybody will ever realize."

She turned and found the black maid gaping at her sleepily

and wondering what invisible lover she was waving at. Mamise made no explanation, but went in, feeling a trifle foolish, but divinely so.

Polly got out of bed and came all bundled up to Mamise's room to demand an accounting.

"I was just on the point of telephoning the police to see if you had been found in the river."

Mamise did not bother either to explain her past lies or tell any new ones. She majestically answered:

"Polly darling, I have been engaged in affairs of state, which I am not at liberty to divulge to the common public."

'Rot!" said Polly. "I believe the 'affairs,' but not the 'state.'"

Mamise was above insult. "Some day you will know. You've heard of Helen of Troy, the lady with the face that launched a thousand ships? Well, this face of mine will launch at least half a dozen freight-boats."

Polly yawned. "I'll call my doctor in the morning and have you taken away quietly. Your mind's wandering, as well as the rest of you."

Mamise chuckled like a child with a great secret, and Polly waddled back to her bed.

Next morning Mamise woke into a world warm with her own importance, though the thermometer was farther down than Washington's oldest records. She called Davidge on the long-distance telephone, and there was a zero in his voice that she had never heard before.

"This is Mamise," she sang.

"Yes?" Simply that and nothing more.

She laughed aloud, glad that he cared enough for her to be so angry at her. She forgot the decencies of telephone etiquette enough to sing out:

"Do you really love me so madly?"

He loathed sentimentalities over the telephone, and she knew it, and was always indulging in them. But the fat was on the wire now, and he came back at her with a still icier tone:

"There's only one good excuse for what you've done. Are you telephoning from a hospital?"

"No, from Polly's."

"Then I can't imagine any excuse."

"But you're a business man, not an imaginator," she railed. "You evidently don't know me. I'm 'Belle Boyd, the Rebel Spy,' and also 'Joan of Arkansas,' and a few other patriots. I've got news for you that will melt the icicles off your eyebrows."

"News?" he answered, with no curiosity modifying his anger.

"War news. May I come down and tell you about it?"

"This is a free country."

"Fine! You're simply adorable when you try to sulk. What time would be most convenient?"

"I make no more appointments with you, young woman."

"All right. Then I'll wait at my shanty till you come."

"I was going to rent it."

"You just dare! I am coming back to work. The strike is over."

"You'd better come to the office as soon as you get here."

"All right. Give my love to Miss Gabus."

She left the telephone and set about packing her things in a fury. Polly reminded her that she had appointments for fittings at dressmakers'.

"I never keep appointments," said Mamise. "You can cancel them for me till this cruel war is over. Have the bills sent to me at the shipyard, will you, dear? Sorry to bother you, but I've barely time to catch my train."

Polly called her a once unmentionable name that was coming into fashionable use after a long exile. Women had draped themselves in a certain animal's pelt with such freedom and grace for so many years that its name had lost enough of its impropriety to be spoken, and not too much to express disapproval.

"You skunk!" said Polly. And Mamise laughed. Everything made her laugh now; she was so happy that she began to cry.

"Why the crocodiles?" said Polly. "Because you're leaving me?"

"No, I'm crying because I didn't realize how unhappy I had always been before I am as happy as I am now. I'm going to be useful at last, Polly. I'm going to do something for my country."

She was sharing in that vast national ecstasy which is called

patriotism and which turns the flames of martyrdom into roses.

When Mamise reached the end of her journey she found Davidge waiting for her at the railroad station with a limousine.

His manner was studiously insulting, but he was helplessly glad to see her, and the humiliation he had suffered from her failure to keep her engagements with him in Washington was canceled by the tribute of her return to him. The knot of his frown was solved by the mischief of her smile. He had to say:

"Why didn't you meet me at luncheon?"

"How could I prevent the Potomac from putting the old bridge out of commission?" she demanded. "I got there in time, but they wouldn't let me across, and by the time I reached the hotel you had gone, and I didn't know where to find you. Heaven knows I tried."

The simplicity of this explanation deprived him of every excuse for further wrath, and he was not inspired to ask any further questions. He was capable of nothing better than a large and stupid:

"Oh!"

"Wait till you hear what I've got to tell you."

But first he disclosed a little plot of his own with a comfortable guiltiness:

"How would you like," he stammered, "since you say you have news—how would you like—instead of going to your shanty—I've had a fire built in it—but—how would you like to take a ride in the car—out into the country, you know? Then you could tell me, and nobody would hear or interrupt."

She was startled by the similarity of his arrangement to that of Nicky Easton, but she approached it with different dread.

She regretted the broad daylight and the disconcerting landscape. In the ride with Nicky she had been enveloped in the dark. Now the sky was lined with unbleached wool. The air was thick with snow withheld, and the snow on the ground took the color of the sky. But the light was searching, cynical, and the wayside scenes were revealed with the despondent starkness of a Russian novel. In this romanceless, colorless dreariness it was not easy for Mamise to gloss over the details of her meeting with Nicky Easton.

There was no escaping this part of the explanation, however, and she could see how little comfort Davidge took from the news that she had gone so far to be alone with a former devotee. A man does not want his sweetheart to take risks for him beyond a certain point, and he would rather not be saved at all than be saved by her at too high a price. The modern man has a hard time living down the heritage from the ten-thousand-year habitude of treating his women like children who cannot be trusted to take care of themselves.

Mamise had such poor success with the part of her chronicle she wished to publish that she boggled miserably the part she wanted to handle with most discretion. As is usual in such cases, the most conspicuous thing about her message was her inability to conceal the fact that she was concealing something. Davidge's imagination was consequently so busy that he paid hardly any attention to the tremendous facts she so awkwardly delivered.

She might as well have told him flat that Nicky would not divulge his plot except with his arms about her and his lips at her cheeks. That would not have been easy telling, but it was all too easy imagining for Davidge. He was thrown into an utter wretchedness by the vision he had of her surrender to the opportunity and to the undoubted importunity of her companion. He had a morbid desire to make her confess, and confessors have a notorious appetite for details.

"You weren't riding with Easton alone in the dark all that time—without—"

She waited for the question as for a bludgeon. Davidge had some trouble in wielding it. He hated the thought so much that the words were unspeakable, and he hunted for some paraphrase. In the sparse thesaurus of his vocabulary he found nothing subtle. He groaned:

"Without his—his making love to you?"

"I wish you wouldn't ask me," said Mamise.

"I don't need to. You've answered," Davidge snarled. "And so will he."

Mamise's heart was suddenly a live coal, throbbing with fire and keenly painful—yet very warm. She had a man who loved her well enough to hate for her and to avenge her. That was something gained.

Davidge brooded. It was inconceivably hideous that he

should have given his heart to this pretty thing at his side only to have her ensconce herself in the arms of another man and give him the liberty of her cheeks—Heaven knew, hell knew, what other liberties. He vowed that he would never put his lips where another man's had been.

Mamise seemed to feel soiled and fit only for the waste-basket of life. She had delivered her "message to Garcia," and Garcia rewarded her with disgust. She waited shame-fast for a moment before she could even falter:

"Did you happen to hear the news I brought you? Or doesn't it interest you?"

Davidge answered with repugnance:

"Agh!"

In her meekness she needed some insult to revive her, and this sufficed. She flared instantly:

"I'm sorry I told you. I hope that Nicky blows up your whole damned shipyard and you with it; and I'd like to help him!"

Nothing less insane could have served the brilliant effect of that outburst. It cleared the sultry air like a crackling thunderbolt. A gentle rain followed down her cheeks, while the overcharged heart of Davidge roared with Jovian laughter.

There is no cure for these desperate situations like such an explosion. It burns up at once the litter of circumstance and leaves hardly an ash. It fuses elements that otherwise resist welding, and it annihilates all minor fears in one great terror that ends in a joyous relief.

Mamise was having a noble cry now, and Davidge was sobbing with laughter—the two forms of recreation most congenial to their respective sexes.

Davidge caught her hands and cooed with such noise that the driver outside must have heard the reverberations through the glass:

"You blessed child! I'm a low-lived brute, and you're an angel."

A man loves to call himself a brute, and a woman loves to be called an angel, especially when it is untrue in both cases.

The sky of their being thus cleansed with rain and thunder, and all blue peace again, they were calm enough by and by to consider the main business of the session—what was to be done to save the shipyard from destruction?

Mamise had to repeat most of what she had told, point by point:

Nicky was not going to wait till the ships were launched or even finished. He was impatient to strike a resounding blow at the American program. Nicky was going to let Mamise know just when the blow was to be struck, so that she might share in the glory of it when triumphant Germany rewarded her faithful servants in America. Jake Nuddle was to take part in the ship-slaughter for the double privilege of protesting against this capitalistic war and of crippling those cruel capitalists to whom he owed all his poverty—to hear him tell it.

When Mamise had finished this inventory of the situation Davidge pondered aloud:

"Of course, we ought to turn the case over to the Department of Justice and the Military and Naval Intelligence to handle, but—"

"But I'd like to shelter my poor sister if I could," said Mamise. "Of course, I wouldn't let any tenderness for Jake Nuddle stand in the way of my patriotic duty, for Heaven knows he's as much of a traitor to my poor sister as he is to everything else that's decent, but I'd like to keep him out of it somehow. Something might happen to make it possible, don't you suppose?"

"I might cripple him and send him to a hospital to save his life," said Davidge.

"Anything to keep him out of it," said Mamise. "If I should tell the authorities, though, they'd put him in jail right away, wouldn't they?"

"Probably. And they'd run your friend Nicky down and intern him. Then I'd lose my chance to lay hands on him as—"

"As he did on you," was what he started to say, but he stopped in time.

This being Davidge's fierce desire, ne found plenty of justification for it in other arguments. In the first place, there was no telling where Nicky might be. He had given Mamise no hint of his headquarters. She had neglected to ask where she could reach him, and had been instructed simply to wait till he gave her the signal. No doubt he could be picked up somewhere in the enormous, ubiquitous net with which America had been gradually covered by the secret services and by the

far-flung line of the American Protective League made up of private citizens. But there would be a certain unsatisfactoriness about nipping his plot so far from even the bud. Prevention is wisdom, but it lacks fascination.

And supposing that they found Nicky, what evidence had they against him, except Mamise's uncorroborated statement that he had discussed certain plots with her? Enemy aliens could be interned without trial, but that meant a halcyon existence for Nicky and every comfort except liberty. This was not to be considered. Davidge had a personal grudge, too, to satisfy. He owed Nicky punishment for sinking the ship named after Davidge's mother and for planning to sink the ship he was naming after the woman he hoped to make his wife.

Davidge was eager to seize Nicky in the very act of planting his torpedo and hoist him with his own petard. So he counseled a plan of waiting further developments. Mamise was the more willing, since it deferred the hateful moment when Jake Nuddle would be exposed. She had a hope that things might so happen as to leave him out of the dénouement entirely.

And now Davidge and Mamise were in perfect agreement, conspirators against a conspiracy. And there was the final note of the terrible in their compact: their failure meant the demolition of all those growing ships, the nullification of Davidge's entire contribution to the war; their success would mean perhaps the death of Easton and the blackening of the name of Mamise's sister and her sister's children.

The solemnity of the outlook made impossible any talk of love. Davidge left Mamise at her cottage and rode back to his office, feeling like the commander of a stockade in the time of an Indian uprising. Mamise found that his foresight had had the house warmed for her; and there were flowers in a jar. She smiled at his tenderness even in his wrath. But the sight of the smoke rolling from the chimney had caught the eye of her sister, and she found Abbie waiting to welcome her.

The two rushed to each other with the affection of blood-kin, but Mamise felt like a Judas when she kissed the sister she was planning to betray. Abbie began at once to recite a catalogue of troubles. They were sordid and petty, but Mamise shivered to think how real a tragedy impended. She wondered how right she was to devastate her sister's life for

the sake of a cause which, after all, was only the imagined welfare of millions of total strangers. She could not see the nation for the people, but her sister was her sister, and pitifully human. That was the worst wrench of war, the incessant compulsions to tear the heart away from its natural moorings.

CHAPTER II

DAVIDGE thought it only fair to take the Department of Justice operative, Larrey, into his confidence. Larrey was perfectly willing to defer reporting to his office chief until the more dramatic conclusion; for he had an easily understandable ambition to share in the glory of it. It was agreed that a closer watch than ever should be kept on the shipyard and its approaches. Easton had promised to notify Mamise of his arrival, but he might grow suspicious of her and strike without warning.

The period of waiting was as maddening as the suspense of the poor insomniac who implored the man next door to "drop the other shoe." Mamise suffered doubly from her dual interest in Abbie and in Davidge. She dared not tell Abbie what was in the wind, though she tried to undermine gradually the curious devotion Abbie bore to her worthless husband. But Mamise's criticisms of Jake only spurred Abbie to new defenses of him and a more loyal affection.

Day followed day, and Mamise found the routine of the office intolerably monotonous. Time gnawed at her resolution, and she began to hope to be away when Easton made his attempt. It occurred to her that it would be pleasant to have an ocean between her and the crisis. She said to Davidge:

"I wish Nicky would come soon, for I have applied for a passport to France. Major Widdicombe got me the forms to fill out, and he promised to expedite them. I ought to go the minute they come."

This information threw Davidge into a complex dismay. Here was another of Mamise's long-kept secrets. The success of her plan meant the loss of her, or her indefinite postponement. It meant more yet. He groaned.

"Good Lord! everybody in the United States is going to France except me. Even the women are all emigrating. I

think I'll just turn the shipyard over to the other officers of the corporation and go with you. Let Easton blow it up then, if he wants to, so long as I get into the uniform and into the fighting."

This new commotion was ended by a shocking and unforeseen occurrence. The State Department refused to grant Mamise a passport, and dazed Widdicombe by letting him know confidentially that Mamise was on the red list of suspects because of her Germanized past. This was news to Widdicombe, and he went to Polly in a state of bewilderment.

Polly had never told him what Mamise had told her, but she had to let out a few of the skeletons in Mamise's closet now. Widdicombe felt compromised in his own loyalty, but Polly browbeat him into submission. She wrote to Mamise and broke the news to her as gently as she could, but the rebuff was cruel. Mamise took her sorrow to Davidge.

He was furious and proposed to "go to the mat" with the State Department. Mamise, however, shook her head; she saw that her only hope of rehabilitation lay in a positive proof of her fidelity.

"I got my name stained in England because I didn't have the pluck to do something positive. I was irresolution personified, and I'm paying for it. But for once in my life I learned a lesson, and when I learned what Nicky planned I ran right to you with it. Now if we catch Nicky red-handed, and I turn over my own brother-in-law to justice, that ought to redeem me, oughtn't it?"

Davidge had a better idea for her protection. "Marry me, and then they can't say anything."

"Then they'll suspect you," she said. "Too many good Americans have been dragged into hot water by pro-German wives, and I'm not going to marry you till I can bring you some other dower than a spotted reputation."

"I'd take you and be glad to get you if you were as polka-dotted as a leopardess," said Davidge.

"Just as much obliged; but no, thank you," said Mamise. "Furthermore, if we were married, the news would reach Nicky Easton through Jake Nuddle, and then Nicky would lose all trust in me, and come down on us without warning."

"This makes about the fifteenth rejection I've had," said Davidge. "And I'd sworn never to ask you again."

"I promised to ask you when the time was ripe," said Mamise.

"Don't forget. Barkis is always willin' and waitin'."

"While we're both waiting," Mamise went on, "there's one thing you've got to do for me, or I'll never propose to you."

"Granted, to the half my shipyard."

"It's only a job in your shipyard. I can't stand this typewriter-tapping any longer. I'm going mad. I want to swing a hammer or something. You told me that women could build a whole ship if they wanted to, and I want to build my part of one."

"But—"

"If you speak of my hands, I'll prove to you how strong they are. Besides, if I were out in the yard at work, I could keep a better watch for Nicky, and I could keep you better informed as to the troubles always brewing among the workmen."

"But—"

"I'm strong enough for it, too. I've been taking a lot of exercise recently to get in trim. If you don't believe me, feel that muscle."

She flexed her biceps, and he took hold of it timidly in its silken sleeve. It amazed him, for it was like marble. Still, he hated to lose her from the neighborliness of the office; he hated to send her out among the workmen with their rough language and their undoubted readiness to haze her and teach her her place. But she was stubborn, and he saw that her threat was in earnest when she said:

"If you don't give me a job, I'll go to some other company."

Then he yielded and wrote her a note to the superintendent of the yard, and said:

"You can begin to-morrow."

She smiled in her triumph and made the very womanly comment: "But I haven't a thing to wear. Do you know a good ladies' tailor who can fit me out with overalls, some one who has been 'Breeches-maker to the Queen' and can drape a baby-blue denim pant modishly?"

The upshot of it was that she decided to make her own trousseau, and she went shopping for materials and patterns. She ended by visiting an emporium for "gents' furnishings."

The storekeeper asked her what size her husband wore, and she said:

"Just about my own."

He gave her the smallest suit in stock, and she held it up against her. It was much too brief, and she was heartened to know that there were workmen littler than she.

She bought the garment that came nearest to her own dimensions, and hurried home with it joyously. It proved to be a perfect misfit, and she worked over it as if it were a coming-out gown; and indeed it was her costume for her début into the world of manual labor.

Abbie dropped in and surprised her in her attitudes and was handsomely scandalized:

"When's the masquerade?" she asked.

Mamise told her of her new career.

Abbie was appalled. "It's against the Bible for a woman to wear a man's things!" she protested. Abbie could quote the Scripture for every discouraging purpose.

"I'd rather wear them than wash them," said Mamise; "and if you'll take my advice you'll get a suit of overalls yourself and earn an honest living and five times as much money as Jake would give you—if he ever gave you any."

But Abbie wailed that Mamise had gone indecent as well as crazy, and trembled at the thought of what the gossips along the row would do with the family reputation. The worst of it was that Mamise had money in the bank and did not have to work.

That was the incomprehensible thing to Jake Nuddle. He accepted the familiar theory that all capital is stolen goods, and he reproached Mamise with the double theft of poor folks' money and now of poor folks' work. Mamise's contention that there were not enough workmen for the country's needs fell on deaf ears, for Jake believed that work was a crime against the sacred cause of the laboring-man. His ideal of a laboring-man was one who seized the capital from the capitalists and then ceased to labor.

But Jake's too familiar eyes showed that he regarded Mamise as a very interesting spectacle. The rest of the workmen seemed to have the same opinion when she went to the yard in her overalls next morning. She was the first woman to take up man's work in the neighborhood, and she had to

endure the most searching stares, grins, frowns, and comments that were meant to be overheard.

She struck all the men as immodest; some were offended and some were delighted. As usual, modesty was but another name for conformity. Mamise had to face the glares of the conventional wives and daughters in their bodices that followed every contour, their light skirts that blew above the knees, and their provocative hats and ribbons. They made it plain to her that they were outraged by this shapeless passer-by in the bifurcated potato-sack, with her hair tucked up under a vizored cap and her hands in coarse mittens.

Mamise had studied the styles affected by the workmen as if they were fashion-plates from Paris, and she had equipped herself with a slouchy cap, heavy brogans, a thick sweater, a woolen shirt, and thick flannels underneath.

She was as well concealed as she could manage, and yet her femininity seemed to be emphasized by her very disguise. The roundness of bosom and hip and the fineness of shoulder differed too much from the masculine outline to be hidden. And somehow there was more coquetry in her careful carelessness than in all the exaggerated womanishness of the shanty belles. She had been a source of constant wonder to the community from the first. But now she was regarded as a downright menace to the peace and the morals of society.

Mamise reported to the superintendent and gave him Davidge's card. The old man respected Davidge's written orders and remembered the private instructions Davidge had given him to protect Mamise from annoyance at all costs. The superintendent treated her as if she were a child playing at salesmanship in a store. And this was the attitude of all the men except a few incorrigible gallants, who tried to start flirtations and make movie dates with her.

Sutton, the master riveter, alone received her with just the right hospitality. He had no fear that she would steal his job or his glory or that any man would. He had talked with her often and let her practise at his riveting-gun. He had explained that her ambition to be a riveter was hopeless, since it would take at least three months' apprenticeship before she could hope to begin on such a career. But her sincere longings to be a builder and not a loafer won his respect.

When she expressed a shy wish to belong to his riveting-gang he said:

"Right you are, miss—or should I say mister?"

"I'd be proud if you'd call me bo," said Mamise.

"Right you are, bo. We'll start you in as a passer-boy. I'll be glad to get rid of that sleep-walker. Hay, Snotty!" he called to a grimy lad with an old bucket. The youth rubbed the back of his greasy glove across the snub of nose that had won him his name, and, shifting his precocious quid, growled:

"Ah, what!"

"Ah, go git your time—or change to another gang. Tell the supe. I'm not fast enough for you. Go on—beat it!"

Mamise saw that she already had an enemy. She protested against displacing another toiler, but Sutton told her that there were jobs enough for the cub.

He explained the nature of Mamise's duties, talking out of one side of his mouth and using the other for ejaculations of an apparently inexhaustible supply of tobacco-juice. Seeing that Mamise's startled eyes kept following these missiles, he laughed:

"Do you use chewin'?"

"I don't think so," said Mamise, not quite sure of his meaning.

"Well, you'll have to keep a wad of gum goin', then, for you cert'n'y need a lot of spit in this business."

Mamise found this true enough, and the next time Davidge saw her she kept her grinders milling and used the back of her glove with a professional air. For the present, however, she had no brain-cells to spare for mastication. Sutton introduced her to his crew.

"This gink here with the whiskers is Zupnik; he's the holder-on; he handles the dolly and hangs on to the rivets while I swat 'em. The pill over by the furnace is the heater; his name is Pafflow, and his job is warming up the rivets. Just before they begin to sizzle he yanks 'em out with the tongs and throws 'em to you. You ketch 'em in the bucket—I hope, and take 'em out with your tongs and put 'em in the rivet-hole, and then Zupnik and me we do the rest. And what do we call you? Miss Webling is no name for a workin'-man."

"My name is Marie Louise."

"Moll is enough."

And Moll she was thenceforth.

The understanding of Mamise's task was easier than its performance. Pafflow sent the rivets to her fast and fleet, and they were red-hot. The first one passed her and struck Sutton. His language blistered. The second sizzled against her hip. The third landed in the pail with a pleasant clink, but she was so slow in getting her tongs about it, and fitting it into its place, that it was too cold for use. This threw her into a state of hopelessness. She was ready to resign.

"I think I'd better go back to crocheting," she sighed.

Sutton gave her a playful shove that almost sent her off the platform:

"Nah, you don't, Moll. You made me chase Snotty off the job, and you're goin' t'rough wit' it. You ain't doin' no worse 'n I done meself when I started rivetin'. Cheese! but I spoiled so much work I got me tail kicked offen me a dozen times!"

This was politer language than some that he used. His conversation was interspersed with words that no one prints. They scorched Mamise's ears like red-hot rivets at first, but she learned to accept them as mere emphasis. And, after all, blunt Anglo-Saxon never did any harm that Latin paraphrase could prevent.

The main thing was Sutton's rough kindliness, his splendid efficiency, and his infinite capacity for taking pains with each rivet-head, hammering it home, then taking up his pneumatic chipping-tool to trim it neat. That is the genius and the glory of the artisan, to perfect each detail *ad unguem*, like a poet truing up a sonnet.

Sutton was putting in thousands on thousands of rivets a month, and every one of them was as important to him as every other. He feared the thin knife-blade of the rivet-tester as the scrupulous writer dreads the learned critic's scalpel.

Mamise was dazed to learn that the ship named after her would need nearly half a million rivets, each one of them necessary to the craft's success. The thought of the toil, the noise, the sweat, the money involved made the work a sort of temple-building, and the thought of Nicky Easton's ability to annul all that devout accomplishment in an instant nauseated her

like a blasphemy. She felt herself a priestess in a holy office and renewed her flagging spirits with prayers for strength and consecration.

But few of the laborers had Sutton's pride or Mamise's piety in the work. Just as she began to get the knack of catching and placing the rivets Pafflow began to register his protest against her sex. He took a low joy in pitching rivets wild, and grinned at her dancing lunges after them.

Mamise would not tattle, but she began again to lose heart. Sutton's restless appetite for rivets noted the new delay, and he grasped the cause of it at once. His first comment was to walk over to the furnace and smash Pafflow in the nose.

"You try any of that I. W. W. sabotodge here, you ——, and I'll stuff you in a rivet-hole and turn the gun loose on you."

Pafflow yielded first to force and later to the irresistible power of Mamise's humility. Indeed, her ardor for service warmed his indifferent soul at last, and he joined with her to make a brilliant team, hurtling the rivets in red arcs from the coke to the pail with the precision of a professional baseball battery.

Mamise eventually acquired a womanly deftness in plucking up the rivet and setting it in place, and Davidge might have seen grounds for uneasiness in her eager submissiveness to Sutton as she knelt before him, watched his eye timidly, and glowed like coke under the least breath of his approval.

CHAPTER III

SUTTON was a mighty man in his way, and earning a wage that would have been accounted princely a year before. All the workers were receiving immense increase of pay, but the champion riveters were lavishly rewarded.

The whole shipyard industry was on a racing basis. Plans were being laid to celebrate the next Fourth of July with an unheard-of number of launchings. Every boat-building company was trying to put overboard an absolute maximum of hulls on that day.

"Hurry-up" Hurley, who had driven the first rivets into a steel ship pneumatically, and Charles M. Schwab, of Bethlehem, were the inspiring leaders in the rush, and their ambition was to multiply the national output by ten. The spirit of emulation thrilled all the thrillable workmen, but the riveters were the spectacular favorites. Their names appeared in the papers as they topped each other's scores, and Sutton kept outdoing himself. For special occasions he groomed himself like a race-horse, resting the day before the great event and then giving himself up to a frenzy of speed.

On one noble day of nine hours' fury he broke the world's record temporarily. He drove four thousand eight hundred and seventy-five three-quarter-inch rivets into place. Then he was carried away to a twenty-four-hour rest, like an exhausted prizefighter.

That was one of the great days in Mamise's history, for she was permitted to assist in the achievement, and she was not entirely grateful to Davidge for suppressing the publication of her name alongside Sutton's. Her photograph appeared with his in many of the supplements, but nobody recognized the lilylike beauty of Miss Webling in the smutty-faced passer-boy crouching at Sutton's elbow. The publication of her photograph as an English belle had made history

There were bad sports among them, as among the rich and the classes between. There were unions and individuals that were tyrants in power and cry-babies in trouble. There was much cruelty, trickery, and despotism inside the unions—ferocious jealousy of union against union, and mutual destructiveness.

This was, of course, inevitable, and it only proved that lying, cheating, and bullying were as natural to the so-called "laborer" as to the so-called "capitalist." The folly is in making the familiar distinction between them. Mamise saw that the majority of manual laborers did not do a third of the work they might have done and she knew that many of the capitalists did three times as much as they had to.

It is the individual that tells the story, and Mamise, who had known hard-working, firm-muscled men, and devoted mothers and pure daughters among the rich, found them also among the poor, but intermingled here, as above, with sots, degenerates, child-beaters, and wantons.

Mamise learned to admire and to be fond of many of the men and their families. But she had adventures with blackguards, rakes, and brutes. She was lovingly entreated by many a dear woman, but she was snubbed and slandered by others who were as extravagant, indolent, and immoral as the wives and daughters of the rich.

But all in all, the ship-builders loafed horribly in spite of the poetic inspiration of their calling and the prestige of public laudation; in spite of the appeals for hulls to carry food to the starving and troops to the anxious battle-front of Europe. In spite also of the highest wages ever paid to a craft, they kept their efficiency at a lower point than lower paid workmen averaged in the listless pre-war days. Yet there was no lack of outcry that the workman was throttled and enslaved by the greed of capital. There was no lack of outcry that profiteers were bleeding the nation to death and making martyrs of the poor.

Most of the capitalists had been workmen themselves and had risen from the lethargic mass by the simple expedient of using their brains for schemes and making their muscles produce more than the average output. The laborers who failed failed because when they got their eight-hour day they did not turn their leisure to production. And some of

them dared to claim that the manual toilers alone produced the wealth and should alone be permitted to enjoy it, as if it were possible or desirable to choke off initiative and adventure or to devise a society in which the man whose ambition is to avoid work will set the pace for the man who loves it for itself and whose discontent goads him on to self-improvement! As if it were possible or desirable for the man who works half-heartedly eight hours a day to keep down the man who works whole-souledly eighteen hours a day! For time is power.

Even the benefits the modern laborer enjoys are largely the result of intervention in his behalf by successful men of enterprise who thrust upon the toiler the comforts, the safeguards, and the very privileges he will not or cannot seek for himself.

During the war the employers of labor, the generals of these tremendous armies, were everlastingly alert to find some means to stimulate them to do themselves justice. The best artists of the country devised eloquent posters, and these were stuck up everywhere, reminding the laborer that he was the partner of the soldier. Orators visited the yards and harangued the men. After each appeal there was a brief spurt of enthusiasm that showed what miracles could be accomplished if they had not lapsed almost at once into the usual sullen drudgery.

There were appeals to thrift also. The government needed billions of dollars, needed them so badly that the pennies of the poorest man must be sought for. Few of the workmen had the faintest idea of saving. The wives of some of them were humbly provident, but many of them were debt-runners in the shops and wasters in the kitchens.

A gigantic effort was put forth to teach the American people thrift. The idea of making small investments in government securities was something new. Bonds were supposed to be for bankers and plutocrats. Vast campaigns of education were undertaken, and the rich implored the poor to lay aside something for a rainy day. The rich invented schemes to wheedle the poor to their own salvation. So huge had been the wastefulness before that the new fashion produced billions upon billions of investments in Liberty Bonds, and hundreds of millions in War Savings Stamps.

Bands of missionaries went everywhere, to the theaters,

the moving-picture houses, the schools, the shops, the factories, preaching the new gospel of good business and putting it across in the name of patriotism.

One of these troupes of crusaders marched upon Davidge's shipyard. And with it came Nicky Easton at last.

Easton had deferred his advent so long that Mamise and Davidge had come almost to yearn for him with heartsick eagerness. The first inkling of the prodigal's approach was a visit that Jake Nuddle paid to Mamise late one evening. She had never broached to him the matter of her talk with Easton, waiting always for him to speak of it to her. She was amazed to see him now, and he brought amazement with him.

"I just got a call on long distance," he said, "and a certain party tells me you was one of us all this time. Why didn't you put a feller wise?"

Mamise was inspired to answer his reproach with a better: "Because I don't trust you, Jake. You talk too much."

This robbed Jake of his bluster and convinced him that the elusive Mamise was some tremendous super-spy. He became servile at once, and took pride in being the lackey of her unexplained and unexplaining majesty. Mamise liked him even less in this rôle than the other.

She took his information with a languid indifference, as if the terrifying news were simply a tiresome confirmation of what she had long expected. Jake was tremulous with excitement and approval.

"Well, well, who'd 'a' thought our little Mamise was one of them slouch-hounds you read about? I see now why you've been stringin' that Davidge boob along. You got him eatin' out your hand. And I see now why you put them jumpers on and went out into the yards. You just got to know everything, ain't you?"

Mamise nodded and smiled felinely, as she imagined a queen of mystery would do. But as soon as she could get rid of Jake she was like a child alone in a graveyard.

Jake had told her that Nicky would be down in a few days, and not to be surprised when he appeared. She wanted to get the news to Davidge, but she dared not go to his rooms so late. And in the morning she was due at her job of passing rivets. She crept into bed to rest her dog-tired bones against the morrow's problems. Her dreams were all of death and

destruction, and of steel ships crumpled like balls of paper thrown into a waste-basket.

If she had but known it, Davidge was making the rounds of his sentry-line. The guard at one gate was sound asleep. He found two others playing cards, and a fourth man dead drunk.

Inside the yards the great hulls rose up to the moon like the buttresses of a cliff. Only, they were delicately vulnerable, and Europe waited for them.

CHAPTER IV

TRUE sleep came to Mamise so late that her alarm-clock could hardly awaken her. It took all her speed to get her to her post. She dared not keep Sutton waiting, and fear of the time-clock had become a habit with her. As she caught the gleaming rivets and thrust them into their sconces, she wondered if all this toil were merely a waste of effort to give the sarcastic gods another laugh at human folly.

She wanted to find Davidge and took at last the desperate expedient of pretended sickness. The passer-boy Snotty was found to replace her, and she hurried to Davidge's office.

Miss Gabus stared at her and laughed. "Tired of your rivetin' a'ready? Come to get your old job back?"

Mamise shook her head and asked for Davidge. He was out—no, not out of town, but out in the yard or the shop or up in the mold-loft or somewheres, she reckoned.

Mamise set out to find him, and on the theory that among places to look for anything or anybody the last should be first she climbed the long, long stairs to the mold-loft.

He was not among the acolytes kneeling at the templates; nor was he in the cathedral of the shop. She sought him among the ships, and came upon him at last talking to Jake Nuddle, of all people!

Nuddle saw Mamise first and winked, implying that he also was making a fool of Davidge. Davidge looked sheepish, as he always did when he was caught in a benevolent act.

"I was just talking to your brother-in-law, Miss Webling," he said, "trying to drive a few rivets into that loose skull. I don't want to fire him, on your account, but I don't see why I should pay an I. W. W. or a Bolshevist to poison my men."

Davidge had been alarmed by the indifference of his sentinels. He thought it imbecile to employ men like Nuddle to

corrupt the men within, while the guards admitted any wanderer from without. He was making a last attempt to convert Nuddle to industry for Mamise's sake, trying to pluck this dingy brand from the burning.

"I was just showing Nuddle a little bookkeeping in patriotism," he said. "The Liberty Loan people are coming here, and I want the yard to do itself proud. Some of the men and women are going without necessities to help the government, while Nuddle and some others are working for the Kaiser. This is the record of Nuddle and his crew:

"'Wages, six to ten dollars a day guaranteed by the government. Investment in Liberty Bonds, nothing; purchases of War Savings Stamps, nothing; contributions to Red Cross, Y. M. C. A., K. of C., J. W. B., Salvation Army, nothing; contributions to relief funds of the Allies, nothing. Time spent at drill, none; time spent in helping recruiting, none. A clean sheet, and a sheet full of time spent in interfering with other men's work, sneering at patriotism, saying the Kaiser is no worse than the Allies, pretending that this is a war to please the capitalists, and that a soldier is a fool.'

"In other words, Nuddle, you are doing the Germans' business, and I don't intend to pay you American money any longer unless you do more work with your hands and less with your jaw."

Nuddle was stupid enough to swagger.

"Just as you say, Davidge. You'll change your tune before long, because us workin'-men, bein' the perdoocers, are goin' to take over all these plants and run 'em to soot ourselves."

"Fine!" said Davidge. "And will you take over my loans at the banks to meet the pay-rolls?"

"We'll take over the banks!" said Jake, majestically. "We'll take over everything and let the workin'-men git their doos at last."

"What becomes of us wicked plutocrats?"

"We'll have you workin' for us."

"Then we'll be the workin'-men, and it will be our turn to take over things and set you plutocrats to workin' for us, I suppose. And we'll be just where we are now."

This was growing too seesawy for Nuddle, and he turned surly.

"Some of you won't be in no shape to take over nothin'."

Davidge laughed. "It's as bad as that, eh? Well, while I can, I'll just take over your button."

"You mean I'm fired?"

"Exactly," said Davidge, holding out his hand for the badge that served as a pass to the yards and the pay-roll. "Come with me, and you'll get what money's coming to you."

This struck through Nuddle's thick wits. He cast a glance of dismay at Mamise. If he were discharged, he could not help Easton with the grand blow-up. He whined:

"Ain't you no regard for a family man? I got a wife and kids dependent on me."

"Well, do what Karl Marx did—let them starve or live on their own money while you prove that capital is as he said, 'a vampire of dead labor sucking the life out of living labor.' Or feed them on the wind you try to sell me."

"Aw, have a heart! I talk too much, but I'm all right," Jake pleaded.

Davidge relented a little. "If you'll promise to give your mouth a holiday and your hands a little work I'll keep you to the end of the month. And then, on your way!"

"All right, boss; much obliged," said Jake, so relieved at his respite that he bustled away as if victorious, winking shrewdly at Mamise—who winked back, with some difficulty.

She waited till he was a short distance off, then she murmured, quickly:

"Don't jump—but Nicky Easton is coming here in the next few days; I don't know just when. He told Jake; Jake told me. What shall we do?"

Davidge took the blow with a smile:

"Our little guest is coming at last, eh? He promised to see you first. I'll have Larrey keep close to you, and the first move he makes we'll jump him. In the mean while I'll put some new guards on the job and—well, that's about all we can do but wait."

"I mustn't be seen speaking to you too friendly. Jake thinks I'm fooling you."

"God help me, if you are, for I love you. And I want you to be careful. Don't run any risks. I'd rather have the whole shipyard smashed than your little finger."

"Thanks, but if I could swap my life for one ship it would be the best bargain I ever bought. Good-by."

As she ran back to her post Davidge smiled at the womanishness of her gait, and thought of Joan of Arc, never so lovably feminine as in her armor.

CHAPTER V

DAYS of harrowing restiveness followed, Mamise starting at every word spoken to her, leaping to her feet at every step that passed her cottage, springing from her sleep with a cry, "Who's there!" at every breeze that fumbled a shutter.

But nothing happened; nobody came for her.

The afternoon of the Liberty Loan drive was declared a half-holiday. The guards were doubled at the gates, and watchmen moved among the crowds; but strangers were admitted if they looked plausible, and several motor-loads of them rolled in. Some of them carried bundles of circulars and posters and application blanks. Some of them were of foreign aspect, since a large number of the workmen had to be addressed in other languages than English.

Mamise drifted from one audience to another. She encountered her team-mate Pafflow and tried to find a speaker who was using his language.

At length a voice of an intonation familiar to him threw him into an ecstasy. What was jargon to Mamise was native music to him, and she lingered at his elbow, pretending to share his thrill in order to increase it.

She felt a twitch at her sleeve, and turned idly.

Nicky Easton was at her side. Her mind, all her minds, began to convene in alarm like the crew of a ship attacked.

"Nicky!" she gasped.

"No names, pleass! But to follow me quick."

"I'm right with you." She turned to follow him. "One minute." She stepped back and spoke fiercely to Pafflow. "Pafflow, find Mr. Davidge. Tell him Nicky is here. Remember, *Nicky is here.* It's life and death. Find him."

Pafflow mumbled, "Nicky is here!" and Mamise ran after Nicky, who was lugging a large suit-case. He was quivering with excitement.

"I didn't knew you in pentaloons, but Chake Nuttle pointet you owit," he laughed.

"Wh-where is Jake?"

"He goes ahead vit a boondle of bombs. Nobody is on the *Schiff*. Ve could not have so good a chence again."

Mamise might have, ought to have, seized him and cried for help; but she could not somehow throw off the character she had assumed with Nicky. She obeyed him in a kind of automatism. Her eyes searched the crowd for Larrey, who had kept all too close to her of recent days and nights. But he had fallen under the hypnotism of some too eloquent spell-binder.

Mamise felt the need of doing a great heroic feat, but she could not imagine what it might be. Pending the arrival from heaven of some superfeminine inspiration, she simply went along to be in at the death.

Pafflow was a bit stupid and two bits stubborn. He puzzled over Mamise's peculiar orders. He wanted to hear the rest of that fiery speech. He turned and stared after Mamise and noted the way she went, with the foppish stranger carrying the heavy baggage. But he was used to obeying orders after a little balking, and in time his slow brain started him on the hunt for Davidge. He quickened his pace, and asked questions, being put off or directed hither and yon.

At last he saw the boss sitting on a platform behind whose fluttering bunting a white-haired man was hurling noises at the upturned faces of the throng. Pafflow supposed that his jargon was English.

Getting to Davidge was not easy. But Pafflow was stubborn. He pushed as close to the front as he could, and there a wall of bodies held him.

The orator was checked in full career with almost fatal results by the sudden bellowing of a voice from the crowd below. He supposed that he was being heckled. He paused among the ruins of his favorite period, and said:

"Well, my friend, what is it?"

Pafflow ignored him and shouted: "Meesta Davutch! O-o-h, Meesta Davutch. Neecky is here."

Davidge, hearing his name bruited, rose and called into the mob, "What's that?"

"Neecky is here."

When Davidge understood he was staggered. For a moment he stood in a stupor. Then he apologized to the speaker. "An emergency call. Please forgive me and go right on!"

He bowed to the other distinguished guests and left the platform. Pafflow found him and explained.

"Moll, the passer-boy, my gang, she say find you, life and death, and say Neecky is here! I doan' know what she means, but now I find you."

"Which way—where—did you—have you an idea where she went?"

"She go over by new ship *Mamise*—weeth gentleman all dressy up."

Davidge ran toward the scaffolding surrounding the almost finished hull. He recognized one or two of his plain-clothes guards and stopped just long enough to tell them to get together and search every ship at once, and to make no excitement about it.

The scaffolding was like a jungle, and he prowled through it with caution and desperate speed, up and down the swaying, cleated planks and in and out of the hull.

He searched the hold first, expecting that Nicky would naturally plant his explosives there. That indeed was his scheme, but Mamise had found among her tumbled wits one little idea only, and that was to delay Nicky as long as possible.

She suggested to him that before he began to lay his train of wires he ought to get a general view of the string of ships. The best point was the top deck, where they were just about to hoist the enormous rudder to the stern-post.

Nicky accepted the suggestion, and Mamise guided him through the labyrinth. They had met Jake at the base of the false-work, and he came along, leaving his bundle. Nicky carried his suit-case with him. He did not intend to be separated from it. Jake was always glad to be separated from work.

They made the climb, and Nicky's artistic soul lingered to praise the beautiful day for the beautiful deed. In a frenzy of talk, Mamise explained to him what she could. She pointed to the great hatchway for the locomotives and told him:

"The ship would have been in the water now if it weren't

for that big hatch. It set us—the company back ninety days."

"And now the ship goes to be in the sky in about nine minutes. Come along once."

"Look down here, how deep it is!" said Mamise, and led him to the edge. She was ready to thrust him into the pit, but he kept a firm grip on a rope, and she sighed with regret.

But Davidge, looking up from the depth of the well, saw Nicky and Mamise peering over the edge. His face vanished.

"Who iss?" said Nicky. "Somebody is below dere. Who iss?"

Mamise said she did not know, and Jake had not seen.

Nicky was in a flurry. The fire in Davidge's eyes told him that Davidge was looking for him. There was a dull sound in the hitherto silent ship of some one running.

Nicky grew hysterical with wrath. To be caught at the very outset of his elaborate campaign was maddening. He opened his suit-case, took out from the protecting wadding a small iron death-machine and held it in readiness. A noble plan had entered his brain for rescuing his dream.

Nuddle, glancing over the side, recognized Davidge and told Nicky who it was that came. When Davidge reached the top deck, he found Nicky smiling with the affability of a floorwalker.

"Meester Davitch—please, one momend. I holt in my hant a little machine to blow us all high-sky if you are so unkind to be impolite. You move—I srow. We all go up togedder in much pieces. Better it is you come with me and make no trouble, and then I let you safe your life. You agree, yes? Or must I srow?"

Davidge looked at the bomb, at Nicky, at Nuddle, then at Mamise. Life was sweet here on this high steel crag, with the cheers of the crowds about the stands coming faintly up on the delicious breeze. He knew explosives. He had seen them work. He could see what that handful of lightning in Nicky's grasp would do to this mountain he had built.

Life was sweet where the limpid river spread its indolent floods far and wide. And Mamise was beautiful. The one thing not sweet and not beautiful was the triumph of this sardonic Hun.

Davidge pondered, but did not speak.

With all the superiority of the Kultured German for the untutored Yankee, Nicky said, "Vell?"

Perhaps it was the *V* that did it. For Davidge, without a word, went for him.

CHAPTER VI

THE most tremendous explosives refuse to explode unless some detonator like fulminate of mercury is set off first. Each of us has his own fulminate, and the snap of a little cap of it brings on our cataclysm.

It was a pity, seeing how many Germans were alienated from their country by the series of its rulers' crimes, and seeing how many German names were in the daily lists of our dead, that the word and the accent grew so hateful to the American people. It was a pity, but the Americans were not to blame if the very intonation of a Teutonism made their ears tingle.

Davidge prized life and had no suicidal inclinations or temptations. No imaginable crisis in his affairs could have convinced him to self-slaughter. He was brave, but cautious.

Even now, if Nicky Easton, poising the bombshell with its appalling threat, had murmured a sardonic "Well?" Davidge would probably have smiled, shrugged, and said:

"You've got the bead on me, partner. I'm yours." He would have gone along as Nicky's prisoner, waiting some better chance to recover his freedom.

But the mal-pronunciation of the shibboleth strikes deep centers of racial feeling and makes action spring faster than thought. The Sicilians at vespers asked the Frenchmen to pronounce "cheecheree," and slew them when they said "sheesheree." So Easton snapped a fulminate in Davidge when his Prussian tongue betrayed him into that impertinent, intolerable alien "Vell?"

Davidge was helpless in his own frenzy. He leaped.

Nicky could not believe his eyes. He paused for an instant's consideration. As a football-player hesitates a sixteenth of a second too long before he passes the ball or punts it, and so forfeits his opportunity, so Nicky Easton stood and stared for the length of time it takes the eyes to widen.

That was just too long for him and just long enough for

Davidge, who went at him football fashion, hurling himself through the air like a vast, sprawling tarantula. Nicky's grip on the bomb relaxed. It fell from his hand. Davidge swiped at it wildly, smacked it, and knocked it out of bounds beyond the deck. Then Davidge's hundred-and-eighty-pound weight smote the light and wickery frame of Nicky and sent him collapsing backward, staggering, wavering, till he, too, went overboard.

Davidge hit the deck like a ball-player sliding for a base, and he went slithering to the edge. He would have followed Nicky over the hundred-foot steel precipice if Mamise had not flung herself on him and caught his heel. He was stopped with his right arm dangling out in space and his head at the very margin of the deck.

In this very brief meanwhile Jake Nuddle, who had been panic-stricken at the sight of the bomb in Nicky's hand, had been backing away slowly. He would have backed into the abyss if he had not struck a stanchion and clutched it desperately.

And now the infernal-machine reached bottom. It lighted on the huge blade of the ship's anchor lying on a wharf waiting to be hoisted into place. The shell burst with an all-rending roar and sprayed rags of steel in every direction. The upward stream caught Nicky in midair and shattered him to shreds.

Nuddle's whole back was obliterated and half a corpse fell forward, headless, on the deck. Davidge's right arm was ripped from the shoulder and his hat vanished, all but the brim.

Mamise was untoucned by the bombardment, but the downward rain of fragments tore her flesh as she lay sidelong.

The bomb, exploding in the open air, lost much of its efficiency, but the part of the ship nearest was crumpled like an old tomato-can that a boy has placed on a car track to be run over.

The crash with its reverberations threw the throngs about the speakers' stands into various panics, some running away from the volcano, some toward it. Many people were knocked down and trampled.

Larrey and his men were the first to reach the deck. They found Davidge and Mamise in a pool of blood rapidly enlarg-

ing as the torn arteries in Davidge's shoulder spouted his life away. A quick application of first aid saved him until the surgeon attached to the shipyard could reach him.

Mamise's injuries were painful and cruel, but not dangerous. Of Jake Nuddle there was not enough left to assure Larrey of his identification. Of Nicky Easton there was so little trace that the first searchers did not know that he had perished.

Davidge and Mamise were taken to the hospital, and when Davidge was restored to consciousness his first words were a groan of awful satisfaction:

"I got a German!"

When he learned that he had no longer a right arm he smiled again and muttered:

"It's great to be wounded for your country."

Which was a rather inelegant paraphrase of the classic "*Dulce et decorum*," but caught its spirit admirably.

Of Jake Nuddle he knew nothing and forgot everything till some days later, when he was permitted to speak to Mamise, in whose welfare he was more interested than his own, and the story of whose unimportant wounds harrowed him more than his own.

Her voice came to him over the bedside telephone. After an exchange of the inevitable sympathies and regrets and tendernesses, Mamise sighed:

"Well, we're luckier than poor Jake."

"We are? What happened to him?"

"He was killed, horribly. His pitiful wife! Abbie has been here and she is inconsolable. He was her idol—not a very pretty one, but idols are not often pretty. It's too terribly bad, isn't it?"

Davidge's bewildered silence was his epitaph for Jake. Even though he were dead, one could hardly praise him, though, now that he was dead. Davidge felt suddenly that he must have been indeed the first and the eternal victim of his own qualities.

Jake had been a complainer, a cynic, a loafer always from his cradle on—indeed, his mother used to say that he nearly kicked her to death before he was born.

Mamise had hated and loathed him, but she felt now that Abbie had been righter than she in loving the wretch who had been dowered with no beauty of soul or body.

She waited for Davidge to say something. After a long silence, she asked:

"Are you there?"

"Yes."

"You don't say anything about poor Jake."

"I—I don't know what to say."

He felt it hateful to withhold praise from the dead, and yet a kind of honesty forced him to oppose the habit of lauding all who have just died, since it cheapened the praise of the dead who deserve praise—or what we call "deserve."

Mamise spoke in a curiously unnatural tone: "It was noble of poor Jake to give his life trying to save the ship, wasn't it?"

"What's that?" said Davidge, and she spoke with labored precision.

"I say that you and I, who were the only witnesses, feel sorry that poor Jake had to be killed in the struggle with Easton."

"Oh, I see! Yes—yes," said Davidge, understanding.

Mamise went on: "Mr. Larrey was here and he didn't know who Jake was till I told him how he helped you try to disarm Nicky. It will be a fine thing for poor Abbie and her children to remember that, won't it?"

Davidge's heart ached with a sudden appreciation of the sweet purpose of Mamise's falsehood.

"Yes, yes," he said. "I'll give Abbie a pension on his account."

"That's beautiful of you!"

And so it was done. It pleased a sardonic fate to let Jake Nuddle pose in his tomb as the benefactor he had always pretended to be.

The operative, Larrey, had made many adverse reports against him, but in the blizzard of reports against hundreds of thousands of suspects that turned the Department of Justice files into a huge snowdrift these earlier accounts of Nuddle's treasonable utterances and deeds were forgotten.

The self-destruction of Nicky Easton took its brief space in the newspapers overcrowded with horrors, and he, too, was all but forgotten.

When, after some further time, Mamise was able to call upon Davidge in her wheeled chair, she found him strangely

lacking in cordiality. She was bitterly hurt at first, until she gleaned from his manner that he was trying to remove himself gracefully from her heart because of his disability.

She amazed him by her sudden laughter. He was always slow to understand why his most solemn or angry humor gave her so much amusement.

While her nurse and his were talking at a little distance it pleased her to lean close to Davidge and tease him excruciatingly with a flirtatious manner.

"Before very long I'm going to take up that bet we made."

"What bet?"

"That the next proposal would come from me. I'm going to propose the first of next week."

"If you do, I'll refuse you."

Though she understood him perfectly, it pleased her to assume a motive he had never dreamed of.

"Oh, you mustn't think that I'm going to be an invalid for life. The doctor says I'll be as well as ever in a little while."

Davidge could not see how he was to tell her that he didn't mean that without telling her just what he did mean. In his tormented petulance he turned his back on her and groaned.

"Oh, go away and let me alone."

She was laughing beyond the limits called ladylike as she began to wheel her chair toward the door. The nurse ran after her, asking:

"What on earth?"

Mamise assured, "Nothing on earth, but a lot in heaven," and would not explain the riddle.

CHAPTER VII

DAVIDGE was the modern ideal of an executive. He appeared never to do any work. He kept an empty desk and when he was away no one missed him. He would not use a roll-top desk, but sat at a flat table with nothing on it but a memorandum-pad, a calendar, an "in" and an "out" basket, both empty most of the time.

He had his work so organized that it went on in his absence as if he were there. He insisted that the executives of the departments should follow the same rule. If they were struck down in battle their places were automatically supplied as in the regular army.

So when Davidge went to the hospital the office machine went on as if he had gone to lunch.

Mamise called on him oftener than he had called on her. She left the hospital in a few days after the explosion, but she did not step into his office and run the corporation for him as a well-regulated heroine of recent fiction would have done. She did not feel that she knew enough. And she did not know enough. She kept to her job with the riveting-gang and expected to be discharged any day for lack of pull with the new boss.

But while she lasted she was one of the gang, and proud of it. She was neither masculine nor feminine, but human. As Vance Thompson has said, the lioness is a lion all but a little of the time, and so Mamise put off sexlessness with her overalls and put it on with her petticoats. She put off the coarseness at the same time as she scrubbed away the grime.

The shipyard was still a realm of faery to her. It was an unending experience of miracles, commonplace to the men, but wonder-work to her. She had not known what "pneumatic" or "hydraulic" really meant. The acetylene flame-knife, the incomprehensible ability of levers to give out so much more power than was put in them, dazed her. Nothing in the

Grimms' stories could parallel the benevolent ogres of air and water and their dumfounding transformations.

She learned that machinery can be as beautiful as any other human structure. Fools and art-snobs had said that machinery is ugly, and some of it is indeed nearly as ugly as some canvases, verses, and cathedrals. Other small-pates chattered of how the divine works of nature shamed the crudities of man. They spoke of the messages of the mountains, the sublimities of sunsets, and the lessons taught by the flowerets. These things are impressive, but it ought to be possible to give them praise without slandering man's creations, for a God that could make a man that could make a work of art would have to be a better God than one who could merely make a work of art himself.

But machinery has its messages, too. It enables the little cave-dweller to pulverize the mountain; to ship it to Mohammed in Medina; to pick it up and shoot it at his enemies.

Mamise, at any rate, was so enraptured by the fine art of machinery that when she saw a traveling-crane pick up a mass of steel and go down the track with it to its place, she thought that no poplar-tree was ever so graceful. And the rusty hulls of the new ships showing the sky through the steel lace of their rivetless sides were fairer than the sky.

Surgeons in steel operated on the battered epidermis of the *Mamise* and sewed her up again. It was slow work and it had all the discouraging influence of work done twice for one result. But the toil went on, and when at last Davidge left the hospital he was startled by the change in the vessel. As a father who has left a little girl at home comes back to find her a grown woman, so he saw an almost finished ship where he had left a patchwork of iron plates.

It thrilled him to be back at work again. The silence of the hospital had irked his soul. Here the air was full of the pneumatic riveter. They called it the gun that would win the war. The shipyard atmosphere was shattered all day long as if with machine-gun fire and the riveters were indeed firing at Germany. Every red-hot rivet was a bullet's worth.

The cry grew louder for ships. The submarine was cutting down the world's whole fleet by a third. In February the Germans sank the *Tuscania*, loaded with American sol-

diers, and 159 of them were lost. Uncle Sam tightened his lips and added the *Tuscania's* dead soldiers to the *Lusitania's* men and women and children on the invoice against Germany. He tightened his belt, too, and cut down his food for Europe's sake. He loosened his purse-strings and poured out gold and bonds and war-savings stamps, borrowing, lending, and spending with the desperation of a gambler determined to break the bank.

While Davidge was still in the hospital the German offensive broke. It succeeded beyond the scope of the blackest prophecy. It threw the fear of hell into the stoutest hearts. All over the country people were putting pins in maps, always putting them farther back. Everybody talked strategy, and geography became the most dreadful of topics.

On March 29th Pershing threw what American troops were abroad into the general stock, gave them to Haig and Foch to use as they would.

On the same day the mysterious giant cannon of the Germans sent a shell into Paris, striking a church and killing seventy-five worshipers. And it was on a Good Friday that the men of *Gott* sent this harbinger of good-will.

The Germans began to talk of the end of Great Britain, the erasure of France, and the reduction of America to her proper place.

Spring came to the dismal world again with a sardonic smile. In Washington the flower-duel was renewed between the Embassy terrace and the Louise Home. The irises made a drive and the forsythia sent up its barrage. The wistaria and the magnolia counterattacked. The Senator took off his wig again to give official sanction to summer and to rub his bewildered head the better.

The roving breezes fluttered tragic newspapers everywhere —in the parks, on the streets, on the scaffolds of the buildings, along the tented lanes, and in the barrack-rooms.

This wind was a love-zephyr as of old. But the world was frosted with a tremendous fear. What if old England fell? Empires did fall. Nineveh, Babylon, and before them Ur and Nippur, and, after, Persia and Alexander's Greece and Rome. Germany was making the great try to renew Rome's sway; her Emperor called himself the Cæsar. What if he should succeed?

Distraught by so many successes, the Germans grew frantic. They were diverted from one prize to another.

The British set their backs to the wall. The French repeated their Verdun watchword, "No thoroughfare," and the Americans began to come up. The Allies were driven finally to what they had always realized to be necessary, but had never consented to—a unified command. They put all their destinies into the hands of Foch.

Instantly and melodramatically the omens changed. Foch could live up to his own motto now, "Attack, attack, attack." He had been like a man gambling his last francs. Now he had word that unlimited funds were on the way from his Uncle Sam. He did not have to count his money over and over. He could squander it regardless.

In every direction he attacked, attacked, attacked. The stupefied world saw the German hordes checked, driven rearward, here, there, the other place.

Towns were redeemed, rivers regained, prisoners scooped up by the ten thousand. The pins began a great forward march along the maps. People fought for the privilege of placing them. Geography became the most fascinating sport ever known.

Davidge had come from the hospital minus one arm just as the bulletins changed from grave to gay. He was afraid now that the war would be over before his ships could share the glorious part that ships played in all this victory. The British had turned all their hulls to the American shores and the American troops were pouring into them in unbelievable floods.

Secrecy lost its military value. The best strategy that could be devised was to publish just how many Americans were landing in France.

General March would carry the news to Secretary Baker and he would scatter it broadcast through George Creel's Committee on Public Information, using telegraph, wireless, telephone, cable, post-office, placard, courier.

Davidge had always said that the war would be over as soon as the Germans got the first real jolt. With them war was a business and they would withdraw from it the moment they foresaw a certain bankruptcy ahead.

But there was the war after the war to be considered—the

war for commerce, the postponed war with disgruntled labor and the impatient varieties of socialists and with the rabid Bolshevists frankly proclaiming their intention to destroy civilization as it stood.

Like a prudent skipper, Davidge began to trim his ship for the new storm that must follow the old. He took thought of the rivalries that would spring up inevitably between the late Allies, like brothers now, but doomed to turn upon one another with all the greater bitterness after war. For peace hath her wickedness no less renowned than war.

What would labor do when the spell of consecration to the war was gone and the pride of war wages must go before a fall? The time would come abruptly when the spectacle of employers begging men to work at any price would be changed to the spectacle of employers having no work for men—at any price.

The laborers would not surrender without a battle. They had tasted power and big money and they would not be lulled by economic explanations.

Mamise came upon Davidge one day in earnest converse with a faithful old toiler who had foreseen the same situation and wanted to know what his boss thought about it.

Iddings had worked as a mechanic all his life. He had worked hard, had lived sober, had turned his wages over to his wife, and spent them on his home and his children.

He was as good a man as could be found. Latterly he had been tormented by two things, the bitterness of increasing infirmities and dwindling power and the visions held out to him by Jake Nuddle and the disciples Jake had formed before he was taken away.

As Mamise came up in her overalls Iddings was saying:

"It ain't right, boss, and you know it. When a man like me works as hard as I done and cuts out all the fun and the booze and then sees old age comin' on and nothin' saved to speak of and no chance to save more 'n a few hundred dollars, whilst other men has millions—why, I'm readin' the other day of a woman spendin' eighty thousand dollars on a fur coat, and my old woman slavin' like a horse all her life and goin' round in a plush rag—I tell you it ain't right and you can't prove it is."

"I'm not going to try to," said Davidge. "I didn't build

the world and I can't change it much. I see nothing but injustice everywhere I look. It's not only among men, but among animals and insects and plants. The weeds choke out the flowers; the wolves eat up the sheep unless the dogs fight the wolves; the gentle and the kind go under unless they're mighty clever. They call it the survival of the fittest, but it's really the survival of the fightingest."

"That's what I'm comin' to believe," said Iddings. "The workman will never get his rights unless he fights for 'em."

"Never."

"And if he wants to get rich he's got to fight the rich."

"No. He wants to make sure he's fighting his real enemies and fighting with weapons that won't be boomerangs."

"I don't get that last."

"Look here, Iddings, there are a lot of damned fools filling workmen's heads with insanity, telling them that their one hope of happiness is to drag down the rich, to blow up the factories or take control of 'em, to bankrupt the bankers and turn the government upside down. If they can't get a majority at the polls they won't pay any attention to the polls or the laws. They'll butcher the police and assassinate the big men. But that game can't win. It's been tried again and again by discontented idiots who go out and kill instead of going out to work.

"You can't get rich by robbing the rich and dividing up their money. If you took all that Rockefeller is said to have and divided it up among the citizens of the country you'd get four or five dollars apiece at most, and you'd soon lose that.

"Rockefeller started as a laboring-man at wages you wouldn't look at to-day. The laboring-men alongside could have made just as much as he did if they'd a mind to. Somebody said he could have written Shakespeare's plays if he had a mind to, and Lamb said, 'Yes, if you'd a mind to.' The thing seems to be to be born with a mind to and to cultivate a mind to.

"You take Rockefeller's money away and he'll make more while you're fumbling with what you've got. Take Shakespeare's plays away and he'll write others while you're scratching your head.

"Don't let 'em fool you, Iddings, into believing that rich

men get rich by stealing. We all cheat more or less, but no man ever built up a big fortune by plain theft. Men make money by making it.

"Karl Marx, who wrote your 'Workmen's Bible,' called capital a vampire. Well, there aren't any vampires except in the movies.

"Speaking of vamping wealth, did you ever hear how I got where I am?—not that it's so very far and not that I like to talk about myself—but just to show you how true your man Marx is.

"I was a working-man and worked hard. I put by a little out of what I made. Of nights I studied. I learned all ends of the ship-building business in a way. But I needed money to get free. It never occurred to me to claim somebody else's money as mine. I thought the rich would help me to get rich if I helped them to get richer. My idea of getting capital was to go get it. I was a long time finding where there was any.

"By and by I heard of an old wreck on the coast—a steamer had run aground and the hull was abandoned after they took out what machinery they could salvage. The hull stood up in the storms and the sand began to bury it. It would have been 'dead capital' then for sure.

"The timbers were sound, though, and I found I could buy it cheap. I put in all I had saved in all my life, eight thousand dollars, for the hull. I got a man to risk something with me.

"We took the hull off the ground, refitted it, stepped in six masts, and made a big schooner of her.

"She cost us sixty thousand dollars all told. Before she was ready to sail we sold her for a hundred and twenty thousand. The buyers made big money out of her. The schooner is carrying food now and giving employment to sailors.

"Who got robbed on that transaction? Where did 'dead labor suck the life out of living labor,' as Karl Marx says? You could do the same. You could if you would. There's plenty of old hulls lying around on the sands of the world."

Iddings had nothing in him to respond to the poetry of this.

"That's all very fine," he growled, "but where would I get my start? I got no eight thousand or anybody to lend me ten dollars."

"'The banks will lend to men who will make money make money. It's not the guarantee they want so much as inspiration. Pierpont Morgan said he lent on character, not on collateral."

"Morgan, humph!"

"The trouble isn't with Morgan, but with you. What do you do with your nights? Study? study? beat your brains for ideas? No, you go home, tired, play with the children, talk with the wife, smoke, go to bed. It's a beautiful life, but it's not a money-making life. You can't make money by working eight hours a day for another man's money. You've got to get out and find it or dig it up.

"That business with the old hull put me on my feet, put dreams in my head. I looked about for other chances, took some of them and wished I hadn't. But I kept on trying. The war in Europe came. The world was crazy for ships. They couldn't build 'em fast enough to keep ahead of the submarines. On the Great Lakes there was a big steamer not doing much work. I heard of her. I went up and saw her. The job was to get her to the ocean. I managed it on borrowed money, bought her, and brought her up the Saint Lawrence to the sea—and down to New York. I made a fortune on that deal. Then did I retire and smoke my pipe of peace? No. I looked for another chance.

"When our country went into the war she needed ships of her own. She had to have shipyards first to build 'em in. My lifelong ambition was to make ships from the keel-plate up. I looked for the best place to put a shipyard, picked on this spot because other people hadn't found it. My partners and I got the land cheap because it was swamp. We worked out our plans, sitting up all night over blueprints and studying how to save every possible penny and every possible waste motion.

"And now look at the swamp. It's one of the prettiest yards in the world. The Germans sank my *Clara*. Did I stop or go to making speeches about German vampires? No. I went on building.

"The Germans tried to get my next boat. I fought for her as I'll fight the Germans, the I. W. W., the Bolshevists, or any other sneaking coyotes that try to destroy my property.

"I lost this right arm trying to save that ship. And now that I'm crippled, am I asking for a pension or an admission to an old folks' home? Am I passing the hat to you other workers? No. I'm as good as ever I was. I made my left arm learn my right arm's business. If I lose my left arm next I'll teach my feet to write. And if I lose those, by God! I'll write with my teeth, or wigwag my ears.

"The trouble with you, Iddings, and the like of you is you brood over your troubles, instead of brooding over ways to improve yourself. You spend time and money on quack doctors. But I tell you, don't fight your work or your boss. Fight nature, fight sleep, fight fatigue, fight the sky, fight despair, and if you want money hunt up a place where it's to be found."

If Iddings had had brains enough to understand all this he would not have been Iddings working by the day. His stubborn response was:

"Well, I'll say the laboring-man is being bled by the capitalists and he'll never get his rights till he grabs 'em."

"And I'll say be sure that you're grabbing your rights and not grabbing your own throat.

"I'm for all the liberty in the world, for the dignity of labor, the voice of labor, the labor-union, the profit-sharing basis, the republic of labor. I think the workers ought to have a voice in running the work—all the share they can handle, all the control that won't hurt the business. But the business has got to come first, for it's business that makes comfort. I'll let any man run this shop who can run it as well as I can or better.

"What I'm against is letting somebody run my business who can't run his own. Talk won't build ships, old man. And complaints and protests won't build ships, or make any important money.

"Poor men are just as good as rich men and ought to have just the same rights, votes, privileges. But the first right a poor man ought to preserve is the right to become a rich man. Riches are beautiful things, Iddings, and they're worth working for. And they've got to be worked for.

"A laboring-man is a man that labors, whether he labors for two dollars a day or a thousand; and a loafer is a loafer, whether he has millions or dimes. Well, I've talked longer

than I ever did before or ever will again. Do you believe anything I say?"

"No."

Davidge had to laugh. "Well, Iddings, I've got to hand it to you for obstinacy; you've got an old mule skinned to death. But old mules can't compete with race-horses. Balking and kicking won't get you very far."

He walked away, and Mamise went along. Davidge was in a somber mood.

"Poor old fellow, he's got no self-starter, no genius, no ideas, and he's doomed to be a drudge. It's the rotten cruelty of the world that most people are born without enough get-up-and-get to bring them and their work together without a whistle and a time-clock and an overseer. What scheme could ever be invented to keep poor old Iddings up to the level of a Sutton or a Sutton down to his?"

Mamise had heard a vast amount of discontented talk among the men.

"There's an awful lot of trouble brewing."

"Trouble is no luxury to me," said Davidge. "Blessed is he that expects trouble, for he shall get it. Wait till this war is over and then you'll see a real war."

"Shall we all get killed or starved?"

"Probably. But in the mean while we had better sail on and on and on. The storm will find us wherever we are, and there's more danger close ashore than out at sea. Let's make a tour of the *Mamise* and see how soon she'll be ready to go overboard."

CHAPTER VIII

NICKY EASTON'S attempt to assassinate the ship had failed, but the wounds he dealt her had retarded her so that she missed by many weeks the chance of being launched on the Fourth of July with the other ships that made the Big Splash on that holy day. The first boat took her dive at one minute after midnight and eighty-one ships followed her into the astonished sea.

While the damaged parts of the *Mamise* were remade, Davidge pushed the work on other portions of the ship's anatomy, so that when at length she was ready for the dip she was farther advanced than steel ships usually are before they are first let into the sea.

Her upper works were well along, her funnel was in, and her mast and bridge. She looked from a distance like a ship that had run ashore.

There was keen rivalry among the building-crews of the ships that grew alongside the *Mamise*, and each gang strove to put its boat overboard in record time. The "Mamisers," as they called themselves, fought against time and trouble to redeem her from the "jinx" that had set her back again and again. During the last few days the heat was furious and the hot plates made an inferno of the work. Then an icy rain set in. The workers would not stop for mean weather, hot or cold.

Mamise, the rivet-passer, stood to her task in a continual shower-bath. The furnace was sheltered, but the hot rivets must be passed across the rain curtain. Sutton urged her to lay off and give way to Snotty or somebody whose health didn't matter a damn. Davidge ordered her home, but her pride in her sex and her zest for her ship kept her at work.

And then suddenly she sneezed!

She sneezed again and again helplessly, and she was stricken with a great fear. For in that day a sneeze was not merely

the little explosion of tickled surfaces or a forewarning of a slight cold. It was the alarum of the new Great Death, the ravening lion under the sheep's wool of influenza.

The world that had seen the ancient horror of famine come stalking back from the Dark Ages trembled now before the plague. The influenza swept the world with recurrent violences.

Men who had feared to go to the trenches were snatched from their offices and from their homes. Men who had tried in vain to get into the fight died in their beds. Women and children perished innumerably. Hearse-horses were overworked. The mysterious, invisible all-enemy did not spare the soldiers; it sought them in the dugouts, among the reserves, at the ports of embarkation and debarkation, at the training-camps. In the hospitals it slew the convalescent wounded and killed the nurses.

From America the influenza took more lives than the war itself.

It baffled science and carried off the doctors. Masks appeared and people in offices were dressed in gauze muzzles. In some of the cities the entire populace went with bandaged mouths, and a man who would steal a furtive puff of a cigarette stole up a quiet street and kept his eyes alert for the police.

Whole families were stricken down and brave women who dared the pestilence found homes where father, mother, and children lay writhing and starving in pain and delirium.

At the shipyard every precaution was taken, and Davidge fought the unseen hosts for his men and for their families. Mamise had worn herself down gadding the workmen's row with medicines and victuals in her basket. And yet the death-roll mounted and strength was no protection.

In Washington and other cities the most desperate experiments in sanitation were attempted. Offices were closed or dismissed early. Stenographers took dictation in masks. It was forbidden to crowd the street-cars. All places of public assembly were closed, churches no less than theaters and moving-picture shows. It was as illegal to hold prayer-meetings as dances.

This was the supreme blow at religion. The preachers who had confessed that the Church had failed to meet the

war problems were dazed. Mankind had not recovered from the fact that the world had been made a hell by the German Emperor, who was the most pious of rulers and claimed to take his crown from God direct. The German Protestants and priests had used their pulpits for the propaganda of hate. The Catholic Emperor of Austria had aligned his priests. Catholic and Protestants fought for the Allies in the trenches, unfrocked or in their pulpits. The Bishop of London was booed as a slacker. The Pope wrung his hands and could not decide which way to turn. One British general frivolously put it, "I am afraid that the dear old Church has missed the bus this trip."

All religions were split apart and, as Lincoln said of the Civil War, both sides sent up their prayers to the same God, demanding that He crush the enemy.

For all the good the Y. M. C. A. accomplished, it ended the war with the contempt of most of the soldiers. Individual clergymen won love and crosses of war, but as men, not as saints.

The abandoned world abandoned all its gods, and men fought men in the name of mankind.

Even against the plague the churchfolk were refused permission to pray together. Christian Scientists published full pages of advertising protesting against the horrid situation, but nobody heeded.

The ship of state lurched along through the mingled storms, mastless, rudderless, pilotless, priestless, and everybody wondered which would live the longer, the ship or the storm.

And then Mamise sneezed. And the tiny at-choo! frightened her to the soul of her soul. It frightened the riveting-crew as well. The plague had come among them.

"Drop them tongs and go home!" said Sutton.

"I've got to help finish my ship," Mamise pleaded.

"Go home, I tell you."

"But she's to be launched day after to-morrow and I've got to christen her."

"Go home or I'll carry you," said Sutton, and he advanced on her. She dropped her tongs and ran through the gusty rain, across the yard, out of the gate, and down the muddy paths as if a wolf pursued.

She flung into her cottage, lighted the fires, heated water,

drank a quart of it, took quinine, and crept into her bed. Her tremors shook the covers off. Sweat rained out of her pores and turned to ice-water with the following ague.

The doctor came. Sutton had gone for him and threatened to beat him up if he delayed. The doctor had nothing to give her but orders to stay in bed and wait. Davidge came, and Abbie, and they tried to pretend that they were not in a worse panic than Mamise.

There were no nurses to be spared and Abbie was installed. In spite of her malministrations or because of them, Mamise grew better. She stayed in bed all that day and the next, and when the morning of the launching dawned she felt so well that Abbie could not prevent her from getting up and putting on her clothes.

She was to be woman again to-day and to wear the most fashionable gown in her wardrobe and the least masculine hat.

She felt a trifle giddy as she dressed, but she told Abbie that she never felt better. Her only alarm was the difficulty in hooking her frock at the waist. Abbie fought them together with all her might and main.

"If being a workman is going to take away my waistline, here's where I quit work," said Mamise. "As Mr. Dooley says, I'm a pathrite, but I'm no bigot."

Davidge had told her to keep to her room. He had telephoned to Polly Widdicombe to come down and christen the ship. Polly was delayed and Davidge was frantic. In fact, the Widdicombe motor ran off the road into a slough of despond and Polly did not arrive until after the ship was launched from the ways and the foolhardy Mamise was in the hospital.

When Davidge saw Mamise climbing the steps to the launching-platform he did not recognize her under her big hat till she paused for breath and looked up, counting the remaining steep steps and wondering if her tottering legs would negotiate the height.

He ran down and haled her up, scolding her with fury. He had been on the go all night and he was raw with uneasiness.

"I'm all right," Mamise pleaded. "I got caught in the jam at the gate and was nearly crushed. That's all. It's glorious up here and I'd rather die than miss it."

It was a sight to see. The shipyard was massed with workmen and their families, and every roof was crowded. On a higher platform in the rear the reporters of the moving-picture newspapers were waiting with their cameras. On the roof of a low shed a militarv band was tootling merrily.

And the sky had relented of its rain. The day was a masterpiece of good weather. A brilliant throng mounted to the platform, an admiral, sea-captains and lieutenants, officers of the army, a Senator, Congressmen, judges, capitalists, the jubilant officers of the ship-building corporation. And Mamise was the queen of the day. She was the "sponsor" for the ship and her name stood out on both sides of the prow, high overhead where the launching-crew grinned down on her and called her by her *nom de guerre*, "Moll."

The moving-picture men yelled at her and asked her to pose. She went to the rail and tried to smile, feeling as silly as a Sunday-school girl repeating a golden text, and looking it.

Once more she would appear in the Sunday supplements, and her childish confusion would make throngs in moving-picture theaters laugh with pleasant amusement. Mamise was news to-day.

The air was full of the hubbub of preparation. Underneath the upreared belly of the ship gnomes crouched, pounding the wedges in to lift the hull so that other gnomes could knock the shoring out.

There was a strange fascination in the racket of the shores falling over, the dull clatter of a vast bowling-alley after a ten-strike.

Painters were at work brushing over the spots where the shores had rested.

Down in the tanks inside the hull were a few luckless anonymities with search-lights, put there to watch for leaks from loose rivet-heads. They would be in the dark and see nothing of the festival. Always there has to be some one in the dark at such a time.

The men who would saw the holding-blocks stood ready, as solemn as clergymen. The cross-saws were at hand for their sacred office. The sawyers and the other workmen were overdoing their unconcern. Mamise caught sight of Sutton,

lounging in violent indifference, but giving himself away by the frenzy of his jaws worrying his quid and spurting tobacco juice in all directions.

There was reason, too, for uneasiness. Sometimes a ship would not start when the blocks were sawed through. There would be a long delay while hydraulic jacks were sought and put to work to force her forward. Such a delay had a superstitious meaning. Nobody liked a ship that was afraid of her element. They wanted an eagerness in her get-away. Or suppose she shot out too impetuously and listed on the ways, ripping the scaffolding to pieces like a whale thrashing a raft apart. Suppose she careened and stuck or rolled over in the mud. Such things had happened and might happen again. The *Mamise* had suffered so many mishaps that the other ship crews called her a hoodoo.

At last the hour drew close. Davidge was a fanatic on schedules. He did not want his ship to be late to her engagement.

"She's named after me, poor thing," said Mamise. "She's bound to be late."

"She'll be on time for once," Davidge growled.

In the older days with the old-fashioned ships the boats had gone to the sea like brides with trousseaux complete. The launching-guests had made the journey with her; a dinner had been served aboard, and when the festivities were ended the waiting tugs had taken the new ship to the old sea for the honeymoon.

But nowadays only hulls were launched, as a rule. The mere husk was then brought to the equipping-dock to receive her engines and all her equipment.

The *Mamise* was farther advanced, but she would have to tie up for sixty days at least. The carpenters had her furniture all ready and waiting, but she could not put forth under her own steam for two months more.

The more reason for impatience at any further delay. Davidge went along the launching-platform rails, like a captain on the bridge, eager to move out of the slip.

"Make ready!" he commanded. "Stand by! Where's the bottle? Good Lord! Where's the bottle?"

That precious quart of champagne was missing now. The bottle had been prepared by an eminent jeweler with silver

decoration and a silken net. The neck would be a cherished souvenir thereafter, made into a vase to hold flowers.

The bottle was found, a cable was lowered from aloft and the bottle fastened to it.

Davidge explained to Mamise for the tenth time just what she was to do. He gave the signal to the sawyers. The snarl of the teeth in the holding-blocks was lost in the noise of the band. The great whistle on the fabricating-plant split the air. The moving-picture camera-men cranked their machines. The last inches of the timbers that held the ship ashore were gnawed through. The sawyers said they could feel the ship straining. She wanted to get to her sea. They loved her for it.

Suddenly she was "sawed off." She was moving. The rigid mountain was an avalanche of steel departing down a wooden hill.

Mamise stared, gasped, paralyzed with launch-fright. Davidge nudged her. She hurled the bottle at the vanishing keel. It broke with a loud report. The wine splashed everywhichway. Some of it spattered Mamise's new gown.

Her muscles went to work in womanly fashion to brush off the stain.

When she looked up, ashamed of her homely misbehavior, she cried:

"O Lord! I forgot to say, 'I christen thee *Mamise*.'"

"Say it now," said Davidge.

She shouted the words down the channel opening like an abyss as the vast hulk diminished toward the river. Far below she could see the water leap back from the shock of the new-comer. Great, circling ripples retreated outward. Waves fought and threw up bouquets of spume.

The chute smoked with the heat of the ship's passage and a white cloud of steam flew up and followed her into the river.

She was launched, beautifully, perfectly. She sailed level. She was water-borne.

People were cheering, the band was pounding all out of time, every eye following the ship, the leader forgetting to lead.

Mamise wept and Davidge's eyes were wet. Something surged in him like the throe of the river where the ship went in. It was good to have built a good ship.

Mamise wrung his hand. She would have kissed him, but she remembered in time. The camera caught the impulse. People laughed at that in the movie theaters. People cheered in distant cities as they assisted weeks after in the début of *Mamise*.

The movies took the people everywhere on magic carpets. Yet there were curious people who bewailed them as inartistic!

Mamise's little body and her little soul were almost blasted by the enormity of her emotions. The ship was like a child too big for its mother, and the ending of the long travail left her wrecked.

She tried to enter into the hilarity of the guests, but she was filled with awe and prostrate as if a god had passed by.

The crowd began to trickle down the long steps to the feast in the mess hall. She dreaded the descent, the long walk, the sitting at table. She wanted to go home and cry very hard and be good and sick for a long while.

But she could not desert Davidge at such a time or mar his triumph by her hypochondria. She wavered as she climbed down. She rode with Davidge to the mess-hall in his car and forced herself to voice congratulations too solemn and too fervid for words.

The guests of honor sat at a table disguised with scenery as a ship's deck. A thousand people sat at the other tables and took part in the banquet.

Mamise could not eat the food of human caterers. She had fed on honey-dew and drunk the milk of paradise.

She lived through the long procession of dishes and heard some of the oratory, the glowing praises of Davidge and Uncle Sam, Mr. Schwab, Mr. Hurley, President Wilson, the Allies, and everybody else. She heard it proclaimed that America was going back to the sea, so long neglected. The prodigal was returning home.

Mamise could think of nothing but a wish to be in bed. The room began to blur. People's faces went out of focus. Her teeth began to chatter. Her jaw worked ridiculously like a riveting-gun. She was furious at it.

She heard Davidge whispering: "What's the matter, honey? You're ill again."

"I—I fancy—I—I guess I—I—am," she faltered.

"O God!" he groaned, "why did you come out?"

He rose, lifted her elbow, murmured something to the guests. He would have supported her to the door, but she pleaded:

"Don't! They'll think it's too much ch-ch-champagne. I'm all right!"

She made the door in excellent control, but it cost her her last cent of strength. Outside, she would have fallen, but he huddled her in his arms, lifted her, carried her to his car. He piled robes on her, but those riveters inside her threatened to pound her to death. Burning pains gnawed her chest like cross-cut saws.

When the car stopped she was not in front of her cottage, but before the hospital.

When the doctor finished his inspection she heard him mumble to Davidge:

"Pneumonia! Double pneumonia!"

CHAPTER IX

ONCE more Mamise had come between Davidge and his work. He did not care what happened to his ships or his shipyard. He watched Mamise fighting for life, if indeed she fought, for he could not get to her through the fog.

She was often delirious and imagined herself back in her cruel times. He learned a few things about that mystic period she would never disclose. And he was glad that she had never told him more. He fled from her, for eavesdropping on a delirium has something of the contemptible quality of peeping at a nakedness.

He supposed that Mamise would die. All the poor women with pasts that he had read about, in what few novels he had read, had died or it had been found out that they had magically retained their innocence through years of evil environment.

He supposed also that Mamise would die, because that was the one thing needful to make his life a perfect failure. He had not gone to war, yet he had lost his arm. He had never really desperately loved before, and now he would lose his heart. It was just as well, because if Mamise lived he would lose her, anyway. He would not tie her to the crippled thing he was.

While the battalions of disease ravaged the poor Belgium of Mamise's body the world outside went on making history. The German Empire kept caving in on all sides. Her armies held nowhere. Her only pride was in saving a defeat from being a disaster. Her confederates were disintegrating. The newspapers mentioned now, not cities that surrendered to the Allies, but nations.

And at last Germany added one more to her unforgivable assaults upon the patience of mankind. Just as the Allies poised for the last tremendous all-satisfying *coup de grâce* the Empire put up her hands and whined the word that had become the world-wide synonym for poltroonery, "*Kamerad!*"

Foch wept, American soldiers cursed because they could not prove their mettle and drive the boche into the Rhine. Never was so bitter a disappointment mingled with a triumph so magnificent. The world went wild with the news of peace. The nations all made carnival over the premature rumor and would not be denied their rhapsodies because the story was denied. They made another and a wilder carnival when the news was confirmed.

Davidge took the peace without enthusiasm. Mamisè had been better, but was worse again. She got still better than before and not quite so worse again. And so in a climbing zigzag she mounted to health at last.

She had missed the carnival and she woke on the morning after. Nearly everybody was surprised to find that ending this one war had brought a dozen new wars, a hundred, a myriad.

The danger that had united the nations into a holy crusade had ended, and the crusaders were men again. They were back in the same old world with the same old sins and sorrows and selfishnesses, and unnumbered new ones. And they had the habit of battle—the gentlest were accustomed to slaughter.

It was not the Central Powers alone that had disintegrated. The Entente Cordiale was turned into a caldron of toil and trouble. No two people in any one nation agreed on the best way to keep the peace. Nobody could accept any other body's theories.

Russia, whose collapse had cost the Allies a glimpse of destruction and a million lives, was a new plague spot, the center of the world's dread. While the people in Russia starved or slew one another their terrible missionaries went about the world preaching chaos as the new gospel and fanning the always smoldering discontent of labor into a prairie fire.

Ships were needed still. Europe must be fed. Hunger was the Bolshevists' blood-brother. Unemployment was the third in the grim fraternity.

Davidge increased his force daily, adding a hundred men or more to his army, choosing mainly from the returning hordes of soldiers.

When Mamise at last had left the hospital she found a new

ship growing where the *Mamise* had dwelt. The *Mamise* was at the equipping-dock, all but ready for the sea, about to steam out and take on a cargo of food to Poland, the new-old country gathering her three selves together under the spell of Paderewski's patriotic fire.

Mamise wanted to go to work again. Her strength was back and she was not content to return to crochet-hooks and tennis-racquets. She had tasted the joy of machinery, had seen it add to her light muscles a giant's strength. She wanted to build a ship all by herself, especially the riveting.

Davidge opposed her with all his might. He pointed out that the dream of women laboring with men, each at her job, had been postponed, like so many other dreams, lost like so many other benefits that mitigated war.

The horrors of peace were upon the world. Men were driving the women back to the kitchen. There were not jobs enough for all.

But Mamise pleaded to be allowed to work at least till her own ship was finished. So Davidge yielded to quiet her. She put back into her overalls and wielded a monkey-wrench in the engine-room. She took flying trips on the lofty cranes.

One afternoon when the whistle blew she remained aloft alone to revel in the wonder view of the world, the wide and gleaming river, the peaceful hills, the so-called handiwork of God, and everywhere the pitiful beauty of man's efforts to work out his destiny and enslave the forces.

Human power was not the least of these forces. Ingenious men had learned how to use not only wind currents, waterfalls, and lightning and the heat stored up in coal, but to use also the power stored up in the muscles of their more slow-brained fellows. And these forces broke loose at times with the ruinous effect of tornadoes, floods, and thunderbolts.

The laborers needed merciful and intelligent handling, and the better they were the better their work. It was hard to say what was heresy and what was wisdom, what was oppression and what was helpful discipline. Whichever way one turned, there was misunderstanding, protest, revolt.

Mamise thought that everybody ought to be happy and love everybody else. She thought that it ought to be joy enough to go on working in that splendid shop and about the flock of ships on the ways.

And yet people would insist on being miserable. She, the priestess of unalloyed rapture, also sighed.

Hearing a step on the crane, she was startled. After all, she was only a woman, alone up here, and help could never reach her if any one threatened her. She looked over the edge.

There came the man who most of all threatened her—Davidge. He endangered her future most of all, whether he married her or deserted her. He evidently had no intention of marrying her, for she had given him chances enough and hints enough.

He had a telegram in his hand and apologized for following her.

"I didn't know but it might be bad news."

"There's nobody to send me bad news except you and Abbie." She opened the telegram. It was an invitation from Polly to come back to sanity and a big dance at the Hotel Washington. She smiled. "I wonder if I'll ever dance again."

Davidge was tired from the climb. He dropped to the seat occupied by the chauffeur of the crane. He rose at once with an apology and offered his place to Mamise.

She shook her head, then gave a start:

"Great Heavens! that reminds me! That seat of yours I took on the train from New York. I've never paid for it."

"Oh, for the Lord's sake—"

"I'm going to pay it. That's where all the trouble started. How much was it?"

"I don't remember."

"About two dollars now."

"Exactly one then."

She drove her hand down into the pocket of her breeches and dragged up a fistful of small money.

"To-day was pay-day. Here's your dollar."

"Want a receipt?"

"Sure, Mike. I couldn't trust you."

An odd look crossed his face. He did not play easily, but he tried:

"I can't give you a receipt now, because everybody is looking."

"Do you mean that you had an idea of kissing me?" she gasped.

"Yep."

"You reckless devil! Do you think that a plutocrat can kiss every poor goil in the shop?"

"You're the only one here."

"Well, then, do you think you'll take advantage of my womanly helplessness?"

"Yes."

"Never! Overalls is royal raiment when wore for voitue's sake. You'll never kiss me till you put a wedding-ring on me finger."

He looked away, sobered and troubled.

She stared at him. "Good Heavens! Can't you take a hint?"

"Not that one."

"Then I insist on your marrying me. You have compromised me hopelessly. Everybody says I am working here just to be near you, and that's a fact."

He was a caricature of mental and physical awkwardness.

She gasped: "And still he doesn't answer me! Must I get on my knees to you?"

She dropped on her knees, a blue denim angel on a cloud, praying higher.

He stormed: "For Heaven's sake, get up! Somebody will see you."

She did not budge. "I'll not rise from my knees till you promise to marry me."

He started to escape, moved toward the steps. She seized his knees and moaned:

"Oh, pity me! pity me!"

He was excruciated with her burlesque, tried to drag her to her feet, but he had only one hand and he could not manage her.

"Please get up. I can't make you. I've only one arm."

"Let's see if it fits." She rose and, holding his helpless hand, whirled round into his arm. "Perfect!" Then she stood there and called from her eyrie to the sea-gulls that haunted the river, "In the presence of witnesses this man has taken me for his affianced fiancée."

They had a wedding in the village church. Abbie was matron of honor and gave her sister away. Her children

were very dressed up and highly uncomfortable. Abbie drew Mamise aside after the signing of the book.

"Oh, thank Gawd you're marrit at last, Mamise! You've been such a worrit to me. I hope you'll be as happy as poor Jake and me was. If he only hadn't 'a' had to gave his life for you, you wouldn't 'a' been. But he's watchin' you from up there and— Oh dear! Oh dear!"

Jake was already a tradition of increasing beauty. So may we all of us be!

Mamise insisted on dragging Davidge away from the shipyard for a brief honeymoon.

"You're such a great executive, they'll never miss you. But I shall. I decline to take my honeymoon or live my married life alone."

They went up to Washington for a while of shopping. The city was already reverting to type. The heart had gone out of the stay-at-home war-workers and the tide was on the ebb save for a new population of returned soldiers, innumerably marked with the proofs of sacrifice, not only by their service chevrons, their wound stripes, but also by the parts of their brave bodies that they had left in France.

They were shy and afraid of themselves and of the world, and especially of their women. But, as Adelaide wrote of the new task of rehabilitation, "a merciful Providence sees to it that we become, in time, used to anything. If we had all been born with one arm or one leg our lives and loves would have gone on just the same."

To many another woman, as to Mamise, was given the privilege of adding herself to her wounded lover to complete him.

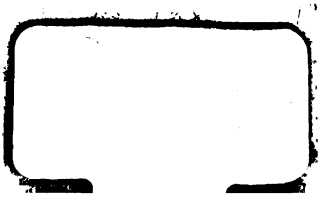
Polly Widdicombe, seeing Mamise and Davidge dancing together, smiled through her tears, almost envying her her husband. Davidge danced as well with one arm as with two, but Mamise, as she clasped that blunt shoulder and that pocketed sleeve, was given the final touch of rapture made perfect with regret: she had the aching pride of a soldier's sweetheart, for she could say:

"I am his right arm."

THE END

JW

AUG 20 1928



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